

# Trusting in the University

The Contribution of Temporality and  
Trust to a *Praxis* of Higher Learning

by

Paul T. Gibbs

Kluwer Academic Publishers

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Higher Learning**

by

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**KLUWER ACADEMIC PUBLISHERS**

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## Dedication

*This book is dedicated to my  
parents and to Jane for letting  
me learn.*

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## Preface

The world in which we learn is changing rapidly. That rapidity is driven by a range of influences, conveniently, but inadequately, clustered under the rubric of globalisation.. The context in which globalisation and education is often linked is that of progression, progression realisable through technology, the free movement of finances and the optimum utilisation of human capital. To fuel this progression, formal educational institutions have grown, adapted and changed to provide highly skilled ‘outputs’ to satisfy demand. Along the way, I will argue, the questioning, learning, reflecting and worthiness of formal education has been sacrificed for instrumentality, compliance and self-interest.

This is seen throughout the educational system but this book concentrates on higher education and, more importantly, higher educational institutions that are known as universities. I will try to argue for a distinctive place for universities that does not resist progression but defines it differently from that allowable by the market. I propose a university system where students and faculty are together allowed to ‘let learn’ who they might become, rather than realise their being as the artefact of economic imperatives. I accept from the very beginning that this might be incompatible with universities being in the world of commerce and industry, in fact, I demand that they are not!

However, my text is not a polemic against the capitalist entrapment of education *per se* but for the development of centres that question whilst engaging with the realities of our existence. An education that does not seek to supply human capital but to build learning communities. I see very good reasons for institutes, polytechnics, applied centres and corporate colleges to supply the hegemonic needs of the owners of economic opportunities but



this text attempts to speak out against a notion of diversity in higher education which is nothing more than a variety of brands within the same product area.

The book asks for students and faculty to seek wisdom and to behave wisely. It asks of them that they do this in a way which can engender the trust of the widest community, of their learning communities and of themselves. It is neither a deceit nor a competence of trust, rather, it is a being of trust. In such universities, access should be provided for all who authentically wish to engage in such activity. I hope I have provided arguments which support the development of such institutions but, if I have failed, this does not diminish the worthiness of the proposal. We have options. They come at a cost but, if we don't take them, then I fear for the nihilism that the market tempts.

## Acknowledgments

This book is important to me. What it says is what I believe although it is more than a ready-at-hand manifestation of my thoughts; rather a collaborative project in which many have taken part, mostly unknowingly, but some in particular whose trust in the project, the compassion of their help and advice is the real measure of my achievement if their efforts have been translated into a worthy book. I hope the book comes close to reflecting their contributions.

Of course I would like to thank Michael Fielding, Christina McRoy, Pavlos Michaelides, Pat Murphy, Koulla Peristiani, Tamara Welschot and the anonymous reviewers for all their help and encouragement but my most humble thanks goes to Jane whose strength, encouragement, concern and love have enabled this book to be offered for your consideration. Of course all errors are hers but out of respect I accept them as mine!

# Chapter 1

## INTRODUCTION

*“education is cultural action for freedom and therefore an act of knowing and not memorization. This act can never be accounted for in its complex totality by a mechanistic theory, for such a theory does not perceive education in general...as an act of knowing”* Freire (1972:13).

### 1. OPENING

Freire’s work on the third world’s need to find a voice through adult literacy to denounce their silence and come to know who they might be, is inspirational. Yet at the core of his work is a message equally valid for the rich post-industrial countries where the individual voice has been, or is going to be, silenced by the totalising of the education system by the market. At least, this is my proposition. To confront this we need to understand that this involves the act of knowing through *praxis* by which man transforms reality or, to paraphrase Heidegger come to know what the unconcealedness of reality is. The discussion which follows is meant to illustrate how much the market has totalised<sup>1</sup> what our notion of university is and then argue what it might still become. That is we ought to return to a way of looking through, rather than at, the picture of our reality constructed for us. Our goal should be of knowing and creating a notion of the future that the temporality of the market foreshortens, making mute those who see the future in terms other than those that equate to monetary value.

<sup>1</sup> Levinas (1999), writes of the totalisation of being as a context-derived notion which has many faces. He argues that there is an impossibility for existence outside the totalisation of being; nothing can be left outside so freedom is totalised, which is seemingly absurd. This has frightening consequences for academic freedom, under market totalisation.

## **2. EDUCATE, TRAIN AND UNDERTAKE RESEARCH**

Tertiary education's varied and rich contribution to the economic, social and political structure and growth of nations has recently and rather compelling been reported upon by the World Bank (2002). As part explanation of their commit to the role of tertiary education they conclude that tertiary education directly influences national productivity, reduces poverty, through access to better employment, increases social capital and facilitates universal educational opportunities. In both developing and developed countries the burden of provision has switched from the State to embrace market consideration and rely more on the private sector to provide provision. The growth in the provision of private institutions, particularly in the developing countries has been much more rapid than in OECD countries. By providing needed skills for economic development, emancipation and private capital private investment has made a significant contribution to their communities and under the rubric of globalisation and contributed to the major changes experienced by the sector in recent years. Wächter observes that it is often "characterized as an ivory tower aloof from the ways of the world, it has been thrown into fierce competition in some parts of the world. Education is more and more viewed as a 'product', rather than a 'public good'. Universities are being transformed into the 'higher education industry' The paradigm shift towards the commercial and the entrepreneurial is also characterized by the emergence of non-traditional providers," (2002:7).

Whether Wächter is correct in that the changes occurring within higher education justify a conceptualization of a paradigm shift he is surely right that educational missions throughout the world are changing to match increased participation, globalisation and notion of efficiency. Under such conditions it is tempting to assume that the purpose of higher education is known but I am not sure. What higher education is and what it is for are big questions with which to open this book, I acknowledge, but questions that at least have been addressed on a global scale in the UNESCO World Declaration and Framework for Priority Action for Change and Development in Higher Education (1998). The 17 Articles of the Declaration begin with outlining that the mission of higher education is to educate train and to undertake research. This is further developed in terms of contributing to the all-human activities that further the needs of society and to assist in the consolidation of human rights, sustainable development, democracy and peace, in a context of justice. My selection from many purposes offered in the Declaration reflects the balance of the wording of the Declaration that clearly includes the economic function of society but is not absorbed by it. It is fundamentally a declaration that balances in the real

word the need to seek critical behaviour, autonomy and responsibility. It addresses the relevance of higher education by advocating a better fit between what society expects of institutions and what they do. This requires ethical standards, political impartiality, critical capacities and, at the same time, a better articulation with the problems of society and the world of work, basing long-term orientation on societal aims and needs, including respect for cultures and environmental protection. It is a declaration which supports equality of access for all including the use of positive discrimination to balance minority groups. It seeks to strengthen higher education management and funding whilst retaining autonomy and sees the funding of higher education as a public service, to include both public and private resources.

The Declaration is a comprehensive document which, as a description of what our higher education systems might be, is motivational, inspiring and relevant. Unfortunately the realism of our educational systems, on the whole, is far from that. Our higher educational systems worldwide fail to deliver on what the Declaration asks and in doing so find themselves in crisis. But this crisis is not articulated as one borne out of educational imperatives, although a number of countries struggle for autonomy and moral authenticity, but as a struggle caused by the capturing of education as an economic instrument.

I will argue that it is a mistake for us to focus on the explicit notions of funding and access for it obscures the main issue, the nature of education itself. I accept that these issues are central to world education and provide a common theme in many contexts; in the UK through the White Paper on the Future of Higher Education (DfES, 2003) or, in the USA's reauthorisation of the Higher Education Acts, or even in the crisis of funding in Bangladesh or Eastern Asia, and might make it seem like they are the essential issue for the sustainability of world-wide higher education. This is however, but a predictable and convenient response by those who have a vested interest in the human capital created in the universities to what is a deeper more essential problem. To simply conceive of the problem as the relationship between economic prosperity and utilisation of resources ensures that higher education debates become enframed by economic value and foreclose its real potential worth in terms of freedom, democracy and tolerance. Such foreclosure is an act of bad faith committed upon the vulnerable and exploitable. The crisis, I will argue, is a manifestation of the fallacious argument based on the market, for the market, and those whose interests are best served by higher education's voice being muted by the demands of 'customers'.

The debate should be directed towards why we have not realised the vision of the Declaration and not what is left after the foreclosure of debate

by some Rousseauian notion of the natural goodness of the market. It ought to be about the vulnerability and courage of not accepting a foreshortened notion of being rather than the totalisation of self as some unit of production determined by the entity of an external other. It is about freedom and enquiry and not about money and privilege.

The USA, Europe and Australia provide transparent examples of the apologistic use of market indicators to justify higher education as an enframement of education as a preparation for Being not just a life. Notions of efficiency by improving quasi-forms of quality and innovation, defined and empowered by consumers are at the heart of normalising, where explicit outcomes and the ability to measure processes systematically are the symbols of good education in most post-industrial countries. This leads, unsurprisingly, to a prescribed way of being where the goals of well being in the lands of the free are a foreclosure of liberty at the hands of those who control the market.

Berlin's (2003) criticism of Rousseau's totalitarianism is a helpful prism to view the crisis of higher education. This crisis is not the process of managerialism, although it contributes, but the foreclosure of ways of being to satisfy a common but selective 'good'. Rousseau's paradoxical notion of liberty is ironically unrecognised in most neo-liberalistic models of a market of education<sup>2</sup> for human dignity and substitutes liberty with a corrupted notion of freedom constrained by the unspoken ubiquity of the market which is based on the false premise of an open engagement of competencies and resources leading to humanistic harmony. This premise of equality of access and utilisation is a sham, evidenced in both the UK<sup>3</sup> and the United States<sup>4</sup> by the lack of real access to the means of production of these competencies through selective class-driven entry requirements of universities.

Education for the realisation of the individual ought not to be a matter of creating human capital, albeit an antecedent of such a process. Education is about personal growth, is about understanding, tolerance, empathy and trust. It is about learning about being and shaping the world of existence. The denigration of education to a commodity, able to be priced, is a consequence of the market ideology, not of the changing needs of an educated person, and it is the destroyer of what democratic sovereignty might be.

Yet we find more intolerance, more self-fulfilling prophecies and more self-interest in those developed Western countries where democratic

<sup>2</sup> Authority within his 'social contract' can act as a painful but revealing model on how an ideological dogma can enframe a way of being which sets out to fulfil the freedom.

<sup>3</sup> For instance see the white paper on 'the future of higher education' 2003.

<sup>4</sup> See P. Sacks' article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* – 'Class Rules: the Fiction of Egalitarian Higher Education', July 25 2003.

practices are ostensibly held in high esteem. In these countries, the rich are getting richer and the poor, well, poorer. Could there be a link between this seemingly contradictory situation and could this link be the new basis upon which education is being developed in some Hegelian thesis, antithesis, synthesis? Are we creating a market where there is an inherent change from the known of others to the owned of others?

Higher education's crisis, flux and radical reform, is driven by a need to increase standards, maintain quality, encourage diversity, seek efficiencies and to satisfy the demand for human capital. This is not my summary, but one easily confirmed by a cursory review of the Internet, the Chronicle of Higher Education in the United States, or the Times Educational Supplement. Nor is this view confined to Britain and the United States – changes in China and Eastern Europe, the growing number of signatories to the Bologna Agreement, Africa and Australia are all experiencing, for the most part, economic-driven changes where demand outstrips the ability of the nation to balance its accounts. Knowledge creation will increase the well-being of many but, if not tempered with a humanistic view, will hurt the well-being of many others.

### 3. FULL MARX

As Marx foresaw, under capitalism individuals become valued only in terms of their contributions to the economy as producers and consumers. More specifically Marx and Engel wrote that capitalism “left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous ‘cash payment’ and ‘egotistical calculation,’” (1985:82).

This ‘owning’ of others is the mechanism of control by which the capitalists (who have generally compromised our mass higher education systems), control higher education through a discourse and actions of management to ensure the decline of universities liberalising, democratising and risk-taking contribution to society. By substituting notions of finance and market definitions for liberty, freedom and equality and replacing them with notions of efficiency and profit, the benefits of the few are presented as available to others provided they forego their right to choose. The market hides man from his possibilities, for it stands between the individual and his total responsibility and hides from himself his responsibilities for acting out his potentialities.

Now I don't want to rehearse the arguments made by many for why this economic discourse is anti-democratic or even feudal, nor do I want to argue that market ideologies are unsafe (although I do believe they are in this context) but through this book I want to argue for a review, a reflection on

what university education ought to be, and draw the line between what is and what might be rather than what has to be. In this respect I want to follow Bourdieu's (1998) confrontation of the presuppositions of the neo-liberal discourse where, "Everywhere we hear it said, all day long – and this is what gives the dominant discourse its strength – that there is nothing to put forward in opposition to the neo-liberal view, that it has succeeded in presenting itself as self-evident, that there is no alternative," (1998:29).

This hegemony has manifested itself in educational policies which redefine education at all levels in terms of the economy. Globally, corporate leaders and governments have endeavoured to shape education to fit the needs of business. Indeed Bok (2002) suspects that many see the existing world of higher education dominated by large, self-satisfied universities – inefficient, resistant to change and overtly indulgent towards a pampered faculty who seem largely unaccountable to the students they supposedly serve. In the UK, for instance, higher education's expanded access policy is predicated almost exclusively on higher education 'products', designed by industry to explicitly evidence competence needed in the work place – the foundation degree is one such example as is the new associate degree in Australia.

#### **4. UNIVERSITIES OR ACADEMIC COMMUNITIES IN CRISIS?**

At this point I must make it clear that my argument in this book is not direct towards the tertiary sector *per se*. Its role in developing higher level skills for active economic participation and improving productivity in competition with corporations and within themselves is acknowledged as providing benefit by developing the creation of a capacity for knowledge production and lifelong learning. However, tertiary education is not university education and it is this part of the sector that I attempt to address from now on. The notion of a university that is at the core of my argument is based on an existential argument for the authenticity represented through the engagement of student and academic in a process of critical appraisal of what is and what might be. The notion I seek is a reunification of the fragmentation of the university through the essentials of learning and letting learn, facilitated through teaching and research. It is a humanistic existentialism, perhaps out of favour with many educational administrators who claim financial imperatives and lack of market orientation as reasons to discard my arguments. But these are based on false premises engaged through the erroneous notions of market liberty, equality of opportunity and diversity which allow them to delude the public and where they alone can



control and constrain education through expenditure. This creates a lack of creative expansion and evokes notions of progression based on the soulless model of monetary value.

So what is happening to higher education and why are we so compliant as to allow these changes to happen? In a word, the system has been totalised. It is funded, assessed and rewarded by what the market and its strategic partners, governments, say they want. This totalisation fosters a bad faith between academics and their increasingly independent, market-salaried chief administrators. As Giroux (2002) points out, administrators are now appointed for their administrative acumen, not their academic status and bravery. The drift to higher skills in the guise of higher education is economically rewarding for the market and is responsive to markets demand for explicit measurement for standard access and finance.

Bok (2003) in the opening chapter of his worthy and balanced book outlines the arguments well. As he so ably explains, “many are afraid that commercially oriented activities will come to overshadow other intellectual values and that university programs will be judged primarily by the money they bring in and not by their intrinsic intellectual quality. They view with dismay how the surrounding economy draws more and more students into vocational fields of study, elevates the salaries of computer scientists, business school professors, and others whose work relates to business, and attracts ever greater sums of outside money for subjects of commercial relevance to the neglect of other worthy, but less practical, fields of study. Even those who support the university's efforts to aid economic growth worry about the side effects of profit-seeking and the unseemliness of institutions of learning hawking everything from sweatshirts to adult education,” (2003:16).

I am not going to argue here against private universities, which function successfully in the USA, the Far and Middle East, are yet to develop in the European Union,<sup>5</sup> but provide significant contribution in the developing and transition countries (see for instance World Bank,, 2002). I believe they have a real role to play in vocational education, improving the skill base of economies and providing the dynamic for economic success particularly in the Marx to Smith evolutions of many transition countries. If they also choose to engage in wider aspects of education, as many have, then that is praiseworthy, but their motives and the form that this takes should be considered with a degree of cynicism. My cynicism is not related to their

<sup>5</sup> It is interesting that the hegemony of the educated classes in Europe seem to balk at anything which might reduce their power – this hegemony is embodied in EU recommendations.

contribution which span humanities and science with extraordinary achievements but to the embedded ideology that drives that contribution. The shift away from public good towards private benefit and the shift from public to private funding in state universities is evident in the UK (DfES, 2003) and the USA where Dennison (2003) and Devaney and Weber (2003) have recently summarised the shift from both the administration's and the universities' own perspective. In the developing and transition countries the invasiveness of the one, market model has shaped the form of higher education through, "notably the World Bank's higher education policy recommendations and the conditionalities included in the stabilisation and structural adjustment programmes 'negotiated', respectively, with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in order to obtain loans," (Ginsburg et al., 2003:413).

What I want to argue is that if society needs to retain its humanity, democracy and essential goodness, it needs people enriched through their engagement with academic communities of practice. Here, universities can provide responsible learning communities which respect individual freedoms and engage in the furtherment of what we might become. But to do so they must match the obligations of this responsibility asked of them in a way we can trust as well as have confidence in.

## **5. THE OPAQUE CRISIS IN HIGHER EDUCATION – FUNDING, ACCESS AND EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE**

### **5.1 Funding**

It perhaps is not surprising that finance is seen by most governments around the world and by the many institutions which observe and intervene in educational matters (World Bank and OECD) as the main crisis in higher education. Despite varying problems, most countries face a financial squeeze in this sector<sup>6</sup> due mainly to a rapid expansion of numbers. In response universities worldwide have introduced fees, sold service provided by the institutions and encouraged donations. This has been done even though, according to Varghese (2002), public budgets for higher education have actually increased in many developed countries whereas in many developing countries they have declined.

That this crisis appears at the same time as the movement for globalisation seems to be inextricably linked to the economics of higher education (See Knight, 2004 for a detailed discussion of this and other matters relating to definitions, approaches and rationales). Gibbons (2001) argues convincingly that the enhanced competition between universities is “primarily a consequence of the rightward shift in political thinking and the globalisation of knowledge production. It constitutes a major change not only in the relationship between universities and society, but also in the relationship between higher education institutions themselves,” (2001:7). This link, with its genesis in western ethics and culture, has much to do with the discourse of the crisis as financial since financial issues can be resolved by capitalistic market mechanisms. And, of course, the educational systems we have developed to accommodate mass higher skills way beyond the optimum levels of demand does need more finance. What it misses, and what Western educational ethics misses, is that the crisis is of its own making. What it has done is to create a profitable industry where students are expected to pay huge fees even to get into the market. In the USA the

<sup>6</sup> Lund (1999) offers a review of the financial problems faced by many commonwealth countries which illustrates that the problem is found in countries ranging from Canada and the UK to Tanzania, Papua New Guinea and Bangladesh.

average yearly fees for a private 4 year college, according to the College Board, is \$18,273 with fee income raising from \$44 billion in 1990 to \$71.8 billion in 1998, an increase way above inflation (Dennison, 2003). This trend was world-wide. In Europe, after Britain introduced tuition fees, the rest of Europe is following suit. Holland, Austria, Italy, Spain and Portugal have all recently introduced tuition fees. France has modest fees too, while in Germany a law that prevents them from being charged is being challenged in 2004. According to Chevailler and Eicher, between 1995 and 1998 private expenditure for higher education increased in seventeen OECD countries, “sometimes a great deal, as in Turkey, Portugal and Italy. They visibly decreased in only three countries, Mexico, Austria and the Czech Republic” (2002:89).

Clearly people are prepared to pay for an anticipated future return – but the argument, worldwide, is that at this current level the fees, tuition and maintenance are too high for the State to support all students and that private funds into the system have not increased resources but tended only to substitute those of the State. We seem to have a dilemma which is created by the complex interweaving of social and private values of education resulting in a discourse of the dollar, pound, euro, etc. instead of the intrinsic value of education. The result is a more efficient system of education for supplying employers with compliant and skilled operatives but, in so being, does it not also accelerate the world’s slide into consumerised nihilism?

The shifts in the constructed demand for university education has, it is true, created enormous strains on the ability of government and alternative sources of funding to provide for the needs of citizens. This demand is fuelled by the extremely high rates of return on the investment made into higher education. In developing countries, these returns now outstrip the return on basic education and in all recorded data outstrips the social return on such investment (Psacharopoulos and Patrinos, 2002). These returns, as implied by Psacharopoulos and Patrinos are unlikely to remain so high as increased supply matches and exceeds demand. I am not claiming it ought not to be financially worthwhile gaining a higher education only that the returns seem to be articulated, at least by the World Bank, mainly in terms of financial rewards. This leads to notions of higher education which create a crisis if governments feel it is their responsibility to provide such opportunities for all of their citizens. Indeed, it seems right that they should feel such anxiety if higher education automatically gives secure, highly paid jobs to all those who pass through it and are accredited to have done so. But this is manifestly not the case. Employers simply change the goal posts in order to level the numbers able to enjoy the cream of the benefits. Whether it is the need for specialisms at Masters levels or certain grades in the degree classification or selection from certain élite universities, higher education

does not provide a sure-fire route from graduation for the universal financial well-being of all.

The crisis of under funded universities seems not to be resolved through attempts to raise private sources of income to replace public funding for this is a zero sum game however, according to Varghese (2002), this is what seems to have happened. Surely the rationale for this shift in funding responsibility needs some substantive rationale other than 'the money is running out'. It is true that in the USA private donations are significantly higher than in Europe (private funding stands at 0.2% of GDP in Europe compared with 0.6% in Japan and 1.2% in the USA, (Commission of the European Communities, 2003)) but what is the basis for this giving? It is resolvable by making students pay for their private return of their education and not for their social. Accountancy training ought not to be free, key skills training likewise. Becker's (1964) distinction between specific skills (for which employers should pay) and general skills (for which they should not) illustrates the point. The latter is expected from the educational system and the former from specialised training either in terms of vocational degrees – medicine, law or business or by employer-sponsored, skills-related training whilst in employment. This distinction has become more blurred as employers expect more from the generic component of education without compensatory investment. Could the financial crisis actually be caused by the state financing the surplus value accruing to employers and graduates in excess of the social value it receives? If so – and there seems to be evidence of this (Chevalier et al., 2002; discussion of surplus return from higher education to employers) – how can this be fair to graduates and non-graduates alike?

To resolve the crisis we first need to decide what higher education's social value is, fund that and let those who otherwise directly benefit from a form of higher skill acquisition pay directly for it. This is to advocate the expansion of private education like the experiment in Portugal or the Phoenix University in the States. Private education either within a company such as Toyota in Japan or the growing number of corporate universities would seem to me, where diversity of higher education and skills opportunities exist, to be compatible with the market. If employers want more than educated citizens then they and ourselves should pay for these skills. I accept this might be looking forwards, backwards, to the Grandes Ecoles of France or the Institutions of Eastern Europe, but at least they had a veracity about what they did (and do) that the complex and ambiguous missions of most universities in Europe, the States, Australia and Asia may find wanting.

Financial crisis – what financial crisis? It disappears when we stop marginally costing our education and are forced to make real decisions about

what we want. As an editorial in *BusinessWeek* succinctly framed the crisis from the economic perspective, “the challenges are clear. Do taxpayers come up with more money for colleges, demanding in return better-run systems and more accountability? Or should fewer kids aim for a college degree?” (BusinessWeek [http://asis.businessweek.com/magazine/content/3\\_17/b3830011.htm](http://asis.businessweek.com/magazine/content/3_17/b3830011.htm))

## 5.2 Standards and external quality in higher education

The hope for decreasing funding costs along with the maintenance of standards, according to Srikanthan and Dalrymple (2003), “established a firm basis for the funding bodies to steer the universities towards the adoption of QM<sup>7</sup> so that there is hope for growth over the longer term,” (2003:133). So let’s start with standards. Standards have real credence when applied to processes which are required to be standardised in some form or other. Standards give consumers benchmarks to evaluate the service they receive and the service they should expect, standards build security and confidence. Excellent for higher education then? Well, not according to Readings (1996) at least. However, standards can drift into standardisation, confusing what they prescribe with the act itself. The worth of the process is the outcomes offered but the risk is that the standard takes over the essence of that which it stands to clarify. Education then becomes meeting standards in discipline knowledge, in critical thinking, in creativity and in key skills. Standards without any democratic mandate can metamorphose what they enframe.

So what do standards achieve for teaching and learning in higher education? My take is by now fairly obvious; they tame the creative, autonomous yet robust thinking of the academy and turn it into an instrument of foreclosure, of power and of radical neo-liberal contempt of diversity, excellence and heterogeneity. Certainly, the debate seems to be about outputs benchmarked against market criteria.<sup>8</sup> But as Coates and Adnett (2003) are quick to point out (at least in the UK), in its higher education, unlike its secondary education, the predominant hierarchies are based on inputs rather than outputs as measures of student abilities. They claim that is “largely due to the absence of external exit examinations in UK HE, preventing the type of comparisons between educational institutions’ performances popularised in school tables,” (2003:209). They go further to

<sup>7</sup> Quality Management.

<sup>8</sup> Nietzsche’s warning is pertinent here, “The effort to climb a mountain is certainly not the standard by which to assess its height” (1990:302).

claim that the asymmetry of information faced by employers leads them to use the reputation of the institution the student attended to signal an applicant's superior pre-existing job/productivity-related ability.

Certainly standards can indicate when a person has achieved something but it cannot identify forms of learning unseen or measured by the standard, nor the impact of teaching as a change agent in the perceptual understanding as self in the process of becoming. Standards are static, learning and teaching is dynamic. Standards seek homogeneity, learning needs individual experience. Standards are grounded in the past whereas higher education (not necessarily higher skills) ought to be grounded in the future.

The difficulty of the language of standards was recognised implicitly by the recent *Final Report of the HEFCE Task Group on the Information on Quality and Standards in Higher Education* where the notion of standards are included – but what they are, how they can be constructed and their validity is not; this is left to the institution. So if standards can be anything you want them to be, how can they be adequately compared for consumers and others in a complex, competitive market place to make decisions on? The real reason for the discourse of standards is found in the *QAA Evidence to the Inquiry into Higher Education by the Education Sub Committee of the Education and Employment Committee of the House of Commons* where the justification of a shift to explicit standards as the controlling structure of higher education institutions is explained thus:

“In a small, élite university system, academic standards and values were implicit. Those who recruited graduates to blue-chip companies, to the professions and to public service were themselves graduates. Teachers in selective schools who advised their pupils where to study were a part of the same establishment. The value added by a higher education was well understood.

“In an egalitarian, mass participation system, all that changes. Standards and values must be made explicit to those investing their time and money in study, and above all to those employers who will not know from personal experience of the value that higher education can add. Understanding of the benefits cannot be shared informally through a narrow social network, it must be widely available to all with an interest,” ([http://www.qaa.ac.uk/crntwork/graded/part1\\_textonly.htm](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/crntwork/graded/part1_textonly.htm), 16.7.2003).

Further, on assessing these standards no metric will be used which might be compatible with a notion of standards which has meaning in an educational rather than a narrow competencies sense. To a certain extent, assessors will make judgements – presumably informed by practice – as to where the standards of the course can sustainably match the outcomes of the

course. If they can do this they can announce they are confident in the standards of the Institution. This seems anything but clear. If we are to understand the context of these judgements then we should have full disclosure of the assessors, their interest in the institution, their spouse's and their uncle's hobbies and were they ever a card carrying member of the Labour party! Or should we trust these academics? If we trust them then why not trust other academics – even those in the assessed institutions – thus getting rid of the notion of external assessment of standards altogether.

Other countries fare no better. The USA has centralised standards for higher education, not teaching and learning but administrative procedures (see Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, <http://www.cas.edu>) which seems more appropriate since corporate senior officials are appointed head of institutions for their fund raising abilities, not their intellectual courage. And given the closeness to globalisation that higher education has, then it is not surprising to find a similar desire to externally control higher education throughout Europe, The Middle and Far East as well as Australasia. In a report on European external national quality assurance regimes commissioned by the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA), found that there is “no doubt standards and criteria are suitable tools in connection with transparency-nationally and internationally, but the issue is of course the extent to which they promote the continuous quality improvement at the institution,” (2003:9). I think I agree!

Standards are but one of the means of manipulation that as Giroux states lead to democratic values giving way “to commercial values, intellectual ambitions are often reduced to an instrument of the entrepreneurial self and social vision dismissed as hopelessly out of date,” (2002:428).

According to one regulator, the QAA, there are “two dimensions to the quality of higher education. The first is the appropriateness of the standards set by the institution. The second is the effectiveness of teaching and learning support in providing opportunities for students to achieve those standards,” ([http://www.qaa.ac.uk/crntwork/graded/part2\\_textonly.htm#1](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/crntwork/graded/part2_textonly.htm#1), 16.7.2003).

This seems complex to the point of confusion. Standards are what we quality assure but what we quality assure then become standards – is this right? At least Yorke (1999) offers a way out. He acknowledges that there ought to be a distinction between the terms ‘quality’ and ‘standards’ because of the implication for quality assurance. He suggests, however, that quality assurance can, “in a general way subsume both quality and standards,” (1999:19).

External quality assurance is made more plausible if standards exist but runs the risk of being static, safeguarding an existing condition. In this it



enables quality control against established standards and allows the product thus assured to be marketed worldwide thus ensuring mobility and responsiveness. For sure I do not dispute that the emergence of borderless education heralds important changes in understanding the nature of higher education even some notion of its intrinsic quality as goodness and worthiness. Indeed this is the idea enshrined in the European Council Recommendation (EC) No 561/98 of 24 September 1998 on European cooperation in quality assurance in higher education states that the systems of quality assessment and quality assurance throughout the community must be based on the following principles:

- autonomy and independence of the bodies responsible for quality assessment and quality assurance;
- relating evaluation procedures to the way institutions see themselves;
- internal (self-reflective) and external (experts' appraisals) assessment;
- involvement of all the players (teaching staff, administrators, students, alumni, social partners, professional associations, inclusion of foreign experts);
- publication of evaluation reports.

There was a recent ENQA (2003) review of how European nations were implementing quality assurance much of which concerned accreditation and evaluation of programmes. Under this directive and the Bologna declaration, external quality agencies throughout Europe are to provide a more recognisable and transferable product which, through the currency of 'credit', allows students greater flexibility to 'Europeanize' their qualification during its creation and makes it more acceptable within the European employment market. For those who want their skills and their achievement systematically commoditised this has real advantages. Further, it becomes a cornerstone for conformity. What is more, as these products' outcomes are clear and transparent the market is more able to make informed and fair decisions on the merit of candidates for employment by minimising the need to understand the person as anything substantially more than a degree holder. Under these initiatives it remains to be seen if external quality assurance results in a better educated rather than a more homogeneously accredited population for although it does seem designed to deliver more 'relevant' knowledge, skills and competences in more efficient ways to student and future workers (to paraphrase Roznyai, 2003) it is less explicit on the notion of worthiness of accomplishment, responsibility and respect.

So can there be any crisis with regard to external quality assurance that the market can't fix. Surely informed buyers who have the resources to gain

sufficient information are equal participants in an open exchange of goods and services? Quality should look after itself. If education is a market then external quality assurance systems act as signals to reinforce brands and to reassure a public ill-informed about the nature of higher education that value for money (not of education) is provided. Watty (2003) expresses similar but perhaps more sympathetic views when she argues that academics still struggle to embrace quality as a dominating discourse in higher education because of its multifaceted categorisations by different stakeholders. This rings true and my position is not against quality of the transformation process which I believe university education to be but against desire to conceive of higher education as a corporate service to industry and its external, intrusiveness in the academic student engagement. In this form it shapes and controls the notion of tertiary education as an undifferentiated whole rather than reflect what might be good and worthy (and necessarily personal) in the transformative nature of what university education might be.

So, given the argument about standards above, it seems that a sensible quality assurance system for teaching and learning is not possible based on external standards even given the lucrative industries set up to judge quality without, as we have seen, reliable standards of their own. What external quality assurance is in these terms has little to do with the transformative notion of education at the core of this book. As Randall says, quality assurance is for the users of higher education – students and employers – and that students want to be assured about the learning opportunities to be provided. He continues that for “the intended outcomes of the course to be achieved, the learning opportunities must be fit for purpose ... these opportunities are a means to an end. The end is the award or qualification gained,” (2002:192). Quality assurance is thus about processes being followed, it is about fragmentation and extrinsic value. In the sense that Randall uses it quality assurance is not about the diversity and multi-faceted impact of these activities on the self-reliance of students but it is about control. What it is about is constraining the potential for time and space allocated to this exploration and replacing it with determinist outcomes and products. Its value to learning the correct (in this context the only) way is helpful but not for higher education.

External quality assurance systems are good at ensuring productivity and customer satisfaction but this is not how higher education needs to define it. What is needed is increased trust in the professionalism of the academic community and for their reputation to give us the confidence we need in our education system. For this to happen we must not structure it so that this is impossible.

If standards external to the learning community are applied to teaching and to the subject matter in any degree of detail, they encourage pre-

determined actions of the not-to-be-changed variety, which have little to do with the dynamic notion of learning and questioning but everything to do with a pedagogy of confinement. Such a pedagogy is one of distant and secure observation, of distinctive power roles and of ends matching the means. It is not an education but a test in which neither students nor faculty grow; they just succeed in achieving unworthy entitlements. Such limitations, according to Saito, “are symptoms of nihilism and cynicism, of the flattening and thinning of our ethical lives,” (2002:248-249). This nihilism closes off future possibilities, hinging them to the temporality of rationality (see Habermas, 1998), a rationality of the social present, of bad-faith and of inauthenticity. When this is evidenced through activities that are being-in-the-world as actions based on judgements rather than observing acts, *phronesis* can be revealed. In rejecting such “*confined pedagogy*” we support that good education should be based on academic responsibility and a notion of accomplishment worthy of *enriched-merit*.

The crisis then is not found in standards or quality but with a notion of higher education which, through the discourse of globalisation becomes higher skills derived from and returning to a capitalistic model of commoditised being, through a confining, externally homogenised ‘quality’ driven pedagogy. Quality assurance of course need not be like that and as Srikanthan and Dalrymple (2002) have proposed that a holistic model can be developed which has a clear focus on the “transformation of the learners, enhancing them through adding value to their capability” providing a “synergistic collaboration at the learning interface which ... transcends the traditional power relationships” but also offers to “encourage and ensure a collegial culture (2002:220). It is yet to be seen if such a model will work but if it achieves its desire to build a “synergy between educational and organisational theories in contrast to the dichotomy engendered in the models advocated until now” (2002:223) it will be worth the effort.

### 5.3 Access

Access to higher education is included in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states in Article 26 that higher education shall be equally accessed on the basis of merit as well as in the Convention of Discrimination in Education (1960). Indeed much has been done to increase the numbers attending Universities as Osborne from a European perspective, observes:

“In the latter decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century we have seen a major expansion of the higher education (HE) system in Europe. From a small elite sector where some 5% of school-leavers participated – mostly immediately after

leaving the compulsory sector – there now exists a greatly expanded *mass* and in some cases *universal* system. According to recent OECD statistics for 22 of its member countries (of which 16 are European), on average, four out of ten school leavers are likely to participate in higher Tertiary A<sup>9</sup> education in the course of their lives. In some countries, this proportion rises to one in two, and in Finland, New Zealand and Sweden to at least two out of three entering this form of higher education. Between 1995 and 1999, OECD reports that, with the exception of three countries under study, all showed increases in participation in higher education, the average increase being 15%, with some nations showing rises of up to 84% (Poland) during this period. Whilst these increases to a certain extent are a reflection of changing demography, only in a minority of countries (Ireland, Mexico and Poland) does increasing population size account for significant change. Even then, as in all nations, actual increases in participation rate account for significantly more of the overall change.” (Osborne, 2003b:5).

The above quote taken from the *European Journal of Education* summarises well the global notion of the ‘correctness’ of expanding higher education and in doing it in a certain way.

This notion of access to higher education is operationalised both as increasing and widening of participation. Increases in the former indiscriminately count numbers attending higher education and in the latter discriminately provide for under-representative growth in student numbers. The driving force for why they have been so designated is important and they have been sought throughout the world (OECD, 2001) but can be encapsulated by Osborne (2003a) and include economic imperatives created by global competition, technological change and the challenge of the knowledge economy, individual responsibility and self-improvement, employability and social inclusion, and citizenship. These then separate out into two separate notions of economic and social cohesion. Together they emphasise the notion that the supply of education and training should be led by the demand and needs of learners and society rather than by traditional patterns of organisational supply. The literature of globalisation places education as vital to production. However, education is often seen as the cultural and economic instrument of capitalism. As Fitzsimmons observes, when “we take education primarily as a technology for national economic development, that ‘technology’ is focused on some predetermined goal,

<sup>9</sup> Tertiary A education, according to the OECD requires a minimum cumulative theoretical duration of 3 years’ full-time equivalent study and normally are 4 years’ equivalent in duration.

itself already evaluated as of value. Education so configured does not suggest or ask about education's purpose," (2002:184). The process of education becomes enframed within the notion of technology to achieve its efficiencies and by this analogy education becomes a framework for constituting and instituting order and not of revealing essential Being. Thus enframed, education needs resources to achieve its enframed goal of economic development of a world view.

Very well, but even given the desire to increase local availability to develop an educational ethos and to do this at relatively low cost, we have achieved increases in but hardly any widening of participation, whether this be Europe, the United States or other industrialised nations. Explanations abound and Bourgeois et al. (1999) make a compelling argument that this may be due to four areas of inherent conflict, these being:

1. Multiple and ambiguous roles for universities within society.
2. Conflict between needs for institutional survival and their social necessity.
3. Conflicts within the faculty, thus no identifiable community of practice.
4. Conflicts between academics, administrators and management.

There clearly is a fifth, overriding reason – people just don't want to go.

Attempts to widen the diversity of the student body in most countries have failed, despite manipulation through grants, penalties and imposed radical restructuring. Structural diversity in the UK, for instance, has led to the scrapping of the binary line, yet the creation of an informal and blurred transitional line between higher skills and higher education is evidenced in the further education college community and the universities. The same appears, although more formally, in the United States and other European countries such as Finland where the intended function of the *ammattikorkeakoulu* (polytechnics) to provide practically-based professional studies has drifted towards the more traditional university format. Of course some systems have worked with pragmatically-based government initiatives in countries such as Germany and France, but this is hardly due to the market, more to the social engineering desired by governments based on the mantra of higher skills, higher economic growth.

They thus create measures that "encourage institutions (with greater or lesser degrees of coercion) to remove the barriers that they and governments themselves have created," (Osborne, 2003b:11). So we have a system which appealed to a small percentage of the population that, although having undergone massification and adopted new technical methods, new curricula and new validations of value, have still, apparently, presented barriers to large swathes of our population. It is argued that this matters, because those

with the benefits of higher education can earn more money (conveniently forgetting that small, entrepreneurial businesses create more jobs, many graduates take non-graduate employment (Chevalier et al., 2002) and the re-engineering of large organisations) yet these benefits have failed to measure up to the expectations of many graduates. Such indicative evidence would point to the access issue being not one of equity but one of access to financial benefit and this can be rectified outside of a university education. If higher education has a socio-cohesive function, then it does matter for it affects the democratic and moral debate in our societies. Students would not need the artificial incentives of credit, modularisation and accreditation to justify engagement in learning, nor would they be moulded by an education intended to create them as means of production, but they would engage and flourish in a way hidden by our existing disciplines and courses. Access to this is access to time and space, which is currently foreshortened to appease global organisations' needs for homogenised, compliant mediocrity to fuel their personal wealth. (See for instance the Bologna agreement on harmonised forms of degrees awarded across Europe.)

So access, voluntary access not the exploitation of people to build an ideologically accredited mass but one based on ability, personality and flair, is only an issue for the State if education can be separated from financial reward of that education, my rationale being that the massification is an economic not educational phenomenon. However, this creates a paradox. The form of education that was seen to give financial advantage to students is being altered to match the needs of increased numbers on a lower *per capita* income. This creates a different form of education – one that might, when examined, be less attractive to employers. It might just push up the average unit of cost but without an appropriate increase in productivity because it is more readily available and, as a consequence, cheaper labour is not. The irony is that if the form of education is changed so that more can participate, the benefits, according to economic theory, ought to fall, leaving disenchanted graduates with higher skills but little in terms of personal development.

The crisis in access is not a crisis about access *per se*, but access to what, for what and because of what. It is access to economic resources not education, to value not worth, to the present and past and not the future, and to being rather than becoming. Access to finance is a different discussion. It is a discussion about the fairness of allocation of resources and has little to do with access supposedly prevented by the gatekeepers of universities.

## 5.4 Crisis of symptom not cause ?

For sure combining access, quality and funding under the rubric of the economic imperative of education leads to headlines like:

“University cash crisis ‘threat to expansion’” (*Guardian*, 12.6.2002)

“College in Crisis” (*BusinessWeek*, 28.4.2003)

But this is a crisis of symptom not of cause. If the cause is not diagnosed effectively and dealt with even if the symptoms are adequately controlled, a false idea of well-being is formed with an uncertain status awaiting the potentially larger consequences of the real malaise to erupt with devastating impact for the future of our notions of morality and democracy.

## 6. THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

In this book I attempt to seek to identify an institution, the university, which, within the diversity of higher education institutions, addresses the needs of an academic community based on a *praxis* of learning in a forward-looking community. I do so predominantly from an existentialist Heideggerian perspective where *praxis* does not mean Aristotle’s articulation of ethical or political *praxis* that tends to be in opposition to *theoria* and to *poiesis*. Rather, *praxis* is to be understood as originary thinking which in itself is already an acting from out of Being, and is equally a *poiesis*, a bringing forth in language the dimension within which the essential human being responds thoughtfully and with resolve to the call of Being. In this light, whether one is *phronimos* or not depends on the action of thinking, and its thoughtful attentiveness to that which calls for thinking. In Heidegger, *praxis* itself, is an ongoing transformation of *praxis* in each case; it is an ongoing transformation of human existence (the *prakton*) in its response to belonging to Being.

I acknowledge that this is a contestable perspective but through its concepts it provides a framework which may help reveal notions relevant to the project. The choice of community is informed not only by the accepted existentialist educational scholars such as Jaspers (1960) but also by the notion of community that is central in the writing of Macmurray, revitalised by Fielding. In this sense “community is a way of being, not a thing,” (Fielding, 1998): it is not an organisation but a process. A learning community encourages present, past and future students to make judgements and choices about their futures as part of humanity and not as isolated egocentric objects of an imposed social order. Sustained by dialogue, it can

contribute to the reconstitution and revelation of aspects of the student's being.<sup>10</sup>

I will propose that universities ought to have a mission which includes providing just such an inclusive learning community in order to encourage their students' involvement in the experience of scholarly endeavour<sup>11</sup> to learn, in the special sense of knowing who one might be and, through that, to gain an understanding of the human condition. This would require students to engage with the scholarly community they have joined and to take responsibility for the creation of their own futures. I will suggest that a learning community based on existential trust may offer insights for a *praxis* of higher education which, to borrow from Arendt,<sup>12</sup> engages the student in the process of becoming. In developing this argument I will pay little regard to the recognisable mastery of a discipline. This is not to reject the notion (or value) of technicist mastery of disciplines but to emphasise the personal developmental issues offered (although not exclusively) through higher education institutions. I am interested in how the practice of higher education teaching, research and service can contribute to the self-reflective, responsible becoming of those who engage with it and how this could constitute or re-unify the university.

The book is structured loosely in two parts, bridged by a chapter in which I develop a notion of existential trust then relate this to the issues, philosophies and practice faced by universities. In the first part I build the basic argument for why the direction of travel in higher education is problematic for the type of higher education I want to advocate which is by no means exclusive, but is specific. In the second part I explore aspects of a proposed *praxis* of higher education.

The opening chapter engages with the debate that the university is in crisis. I agree with that but not in the often quoted sense of finance, access and external quality assurance. I argue for a deeper more essential crisis, one concerning the very essence of the university. Indeed, I think the use of the managerial discourse to create the crisis of higher education which

<sup>10</sup> Dewey defined a community thus; "Men live in a community by virtue of the things which they have in common: and communication is the way in which they come to process things in common" (1966:4). The extent of that community is not defined by physical proximity but by the commonality of their communication.

<sup>11</sup> In using the term 'scholarly endeavour' I am utilising the concept as developed by Boyer (1990). He classified four interrelated categories of scholarship namely; discovery (fundamental research), integration (synthesis of knowledge from that previously revealed), application (engagement of academic activity with everyday problems), and teaching.

<sup>12</sup> See Arendt, 'The Crisis in Education' 1968, and also Vico (1993)



ostensibly can only be solved through the use of techniques borrowed from industry and commerce is meant more to shape the form of higher education under the market than to help it sustain itself as a forward-looking critic of the way we are. The argument sets the scene for the next chapter that looks in more detail at the context of higher education today.

Chapter Two concludes that both the market and its derivative – libertarianism – fail to produce the type of trusting environment where vulnerability can be disclosed and growth achieved by students and academic alike. It is proposed that the existential concept of authenticity requires a deeper personal involvement in scholarly activity than either managerialism or liberalism can provide. The chapter leads naturally to the discussion on the worth of the market metaphor.

Chapter Three develops the market metaphor for education based on the shift away from intrinsic to explicit value in the internal corporatism of the university as an institution and in the learning community's metamorphosis into customers. The argument is made that the metaphor is inappropriate for its notion of trust is incompatible with the notion of higher education proposed. Addressed in this chapter are the development of the corporate university, the validity of using the model of trust exposed in recent commercial scandals and the development of a culture of suspicion which affects the ability of professionals to do their jobs.

In Chapter Four, a notion of existential trust is developed, based on an empathetic interpretation of respect and benevolence that is revealed through the dialectic engagement with others. This notion is used to turn the focus away from the failure of the market towards a way of academic engagement.

This chapter is structured to consider:

What does trust mean when applied to one's own vulnerability?

How does this definition relate to the trustworthiness of others?

How do we make our choices to trust?

How can we trust institutions?

The chapter concludes by asking what may be an appropriate form of trusting within a university which seeks to deal authentically with its students.

The second part of the book opens with a discussion of the alternatives available under trust if the market model can not provide a worthy model for higher education.

Chapter Five explores the veracity of the business model. I put the market 'under a culture of suspicion' and ask if the market model, given its recent problems, can, or indeed ought to, be entrusted with education. The model seems to lack the basic essence upon which the uncertainty of a personal future ought to be placed – at least, in the sense of openness to learning in an educational setting.

Seeking an alternative to the managerialism found wanting in the first section of the book, Chapter Six takes a phenomenological perspective to develop a *praxis* of higher education by linking temporality and the existential trust notion proposed. Relying heavily on Heidegger the chapter explores our temporality of being as an existential temporality. Having argued for this form of understanding I explore the notion of existential trust as revealed by Heidegger as a ‘practice’ set against a background context through which it is understood. In this way the view of trusting as self-interest and context-bounded is restated in a discourse of disclosure which has advantage for its application in a learning community.

Chapter Seven offers a discussion of authenticity and individual responsibility as connected to the learning experience. In it I discuss the role of the student and others within a learning community and seek to propose reasons why institutionally-bound education might have a function in the development of the authentic well-being of its members. The chapter defines the terms and a relationship between the notions used and seeks to argue for a position where an individual’s self-concerning nature is not in contradiction to his concern for others. The argument is based on the acceptance that individuals are essentially part of humanity. The chapter concludes that, although the search for and actualisation of self-concerning authenticity can contribute to the flourishing of the individual, it is through its communal interpretation that authenticity can best enhance well-being.

Chapter Eight develops the argument of previous chapters by considering the form, and the temporalising, of knowledge. In particular the notion of *a priori* and its temporal status is discussed. Following a discussion on scientific method as a way of observing rather than a truth in itself, I consider the notion of action against a background which reveals what is knowable initially at an ontological level.

Chapter Nine is concerned with how teaching might be conducted in a way which encourages thinking and letting learn. It presents Heidegger’s notion of the higher education teacher and considers the implication for trusting such a teacher. It closes with a discussion of the nature of the student/teacher relationship.

The substantive and penultimate Chapter Ten considers how a *praxis* of higher education pedagogy might be conceived if existentially grounded in trust and explores some aspects of a *praxis* of a scholarly community. These include:

- Existential trust of oneself and of Others
- Active engagement
- Existential reflection

- Educational accreditation should be about “enriched-merit” not achievements
- *Phronimos* as intrinsic quality assurance

These issues are discussed from the perspective of the personal responsibilities that accompany the privileges that such a *praxis* offers to those involved in its realisation. These responsibilities extend to the students, their lecturers, tutors and institutional managers.

The book concludes by pulling together the themes of trust and temporality as central to encouraging higher learning. It illustrates the benefit in political, social and moral terms and argues for a new harmony between organisations, their stakeholders and the world as it might be.

To summarise, I attempt to use trust as an hermeneutic interpretation which may contribute to the engagement of students with the educational function of higher education institutions. Through trust it is plausible that scholarly activities can be more than just exercises in gaining accreditation of prescribed skill; they can offer a way towards practical wisdom – a notion which has similarities with Aristotle’s *phronimos*. In this, trust is considered as a practical dialectic between teacher and student that offers possibilities for a different way of being for each, and it draws upon Zimmerman’s inspiration that, “(A)s I understand my world, so I understand myself,” (1986:54).

## Chapter 2

# LIBERALISM, MASS EDUCATION AND A LOSS OF ACADEMIC TRUST

*“I think that it would be a very abnormal thing to have a homogeneous university, with all the university students thinking alike and having the same commitments. This would be a gross mistake, it would be appalling for our education, for the education of university students. It is evident for me that the difference within the university is deeply enriching, provided that this difference is lived with faith, loyalty, honesty and integrity,” Freire, (1994:91).*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The central questions in this chapter concerns liberalism as its neo-liberal derivative libertarianism or managerialism<sup>13</sup> which are two coarsely differentiated philosophical perspectives commonly used to address a number of issues relating to the nature of higher education. Liberalism as a philosophical doctrine can be distinguished from liberalism as a system of social and political institutions. It is the second that will concern me here. I recognise that higher education is not based on any one detailed philosophical perspective and that each of these I have chosen can act as a lens able only to focus on one dominant foreground. However, although the exercise lacks the sensitivity that more space might afford, the approach

<sup>13</sup> Recently Duke (2001) has written on competing business paradigms of managerialism and networking as a way for a university to realise its goals. Although interesting the power of managerialism has seemingly subsumed the more integrative notion as networking yet both emerge from the same philosophy of economic rationalism.

retains its value in contrasting approaches which themselves have become rationales for advocates (including myself) of certain aims in higher education.

Each helps answer the questions central to what Paterson sees as fundamental to the process of education by attempting “to help people to appreciate what is significant and worthwhile in life and so develop fully as persons in their own right” (1996:3). They are pertinent now for our higher education system, as it is facing major restructuring forced upon it by the challenges of decreasing public funding, increasing availability and capacities of information technology, and increased and widening participation.<sup>14</sup> These changes are altering what we may be led to expect from the experience of higher education. Lack of clarity of what higher education ought to be threatens increased alienation for students; particularly if, to satisfy an economic model of education, we treat them as objects with educational achievements to be counted, accredited and initiated into a society-determined performativity. I question whether, in this new economically aware market of education where the agenda is set by the needs of industry and commerce something that was important to the function of the university has been lost. I also wonder if this loss may be the trust which the community of the university could bring to bear, for those students wishing to take it, to facilitate the realisation of their authentic opportunities.

## **2. IS THERE A REAL PURPOSE OF LIBERAL EDUCATION?**

In *The Idea of University*, Newman (1996) takes pains to explain that ‘Liberal Knowledge’ has nothing directly to do with moral virtue and that “it is as real a mistake to burden it with virtue or religion as with the mechanical arts.” “Knowledge,” he says, “is one thing, virtue another.” He clarifies that everything has its own perfection, and “liberal education, viewed in itself, is simply the cultivation of the intellect.” This cultivation of the intellect, Newman says, is “as intelligible as the cultivation of virtue, while, at the same time, it is absolutely distinct from it.” In one of his most powerful and well-phrased lines, Newman writes: “Quarry the granite rock with razors, or moor the vessel with a thread of silk; then may you hope with such keen and delicate instruments as human knowledge and human reason to contend with those giants, the passion and the pride of man.” He is not in any way

<sup>14</sup> For a statistical summary see Lange (1998).

denigrating moral excellence or subjugating it to intellectual excellence, rather he is trying to place each in its proper sphere.

The human person needs both kinds of formation for personal flourishing. My whole point though, and Newman's, is that we must not, in our admiration for liberal education, obscure its true purpose and meaning. We must not make it more than it is. We must recognize both its merits and its limitations.

Hamlyn has recently attempted this and offered a well-argued case for the function of higher education institutions as the pursuit and provision of learning opportunities. He suggests that the function of universities is not in their accreditation of students but in the provision of opportunities for reaching for truth into the future: "If learning is to be pursued and if knowledge is to be enlarged there have to be institutions like universities, which have the double role of pushing back the frontiers of knowledge and enabling future generations to carry on the process" (1996:216). Hamlyn shares with Oakeshott (1989) a contextualisation of the learning community as essential and central to the nature of the university as an institution of higher education. They clearly see universities as custodians of knowledge where students are initiated through disciplines into critical thinking, and where a search for new knowledge takes place. But, as Oakeshott states, "A university is not a machine for achieving a particular purpose or producing a particular result; it is a manner of human activity" (1989:96). Further, he declares that the distinctive mark of the university is "a place where (the undergraduate) has the opportunity of education in conversation with his teachers, his fellows and himself, and where he is not encouraged to confuse education with training for a profession, with learning the tricks of a trade" (1989:101). Of course this skirts around what culture a liberal education transmits and what level of competence it ought to achieve, but that is a question for elsewhere.

### **3. LIBERALISM AND ITS LIMITS ON FREEDOM**

Classical liberalism, for all its rhetoric of (illusory?) freedom and individual choice in nourishing a student's capacity to make independent judgements, is determined by what is considered reasonable by educators from a range of actions acceptable to them. Although it offers the student a chance to engage with a form of freedom, it does so in a fashion prescribed or at least endorsed by the authority of others and is embedded in a social idealism which has trouble in recognising a dynamic notion of identity. It offers students equality of opportunity as a monologue rather than risking a dialectical dialogue. It fails to recognise that society is functional and

dependent upon community, and confuses collaboration and caring with duty. It is reliant on rules that lead to the competence of trust.of .

A further problem for liberalism occurs when this notion of education is extended to mass education where the pursuit of the liberal notion of utilitarian benefits is a trade-off. In return for an élite education and the associated economic benefits, the graduate beneficiary was expected to accept an obligation to the less fortunate in our society. This is now proving, if it ever had a reality, to be based on a false premise. It is predicated on the economic benefit which was deliverable under privileged liberal education but is not deliverable in mass higher education. Those primarily seeking instrumental benefit who engage with it are left unfulfilled or, as Jonathan tastefully points out, “entail some collective disappointment” (1995:95). It shifts the engagement with education from one about becoming to having. Without state intervention we will have an oversupply of highly educated individuals whose expectations, if primarily economic, will be unrealised. Clearly the ideal of classical liberalism has difficulties in a social context where equity and freedom are expressed as rights for all and where education is seen as a commodity to be bought and used, with self-interested expediency as the main theme. The liberal tradition of rights leads to world views whose incommensurabilities are taken by the communities that subscribe to them as evidence of the truth of that particular tradition. Education then becomes a competitive process of perpetuating the truths of a given tradition rather than a process of creative exploration seeking mutual understanding.

Whereas classical liberalism puts personal autonomy together with the recognition of others at the centre of its philosophy, one can sense a shift to more individual, rights-and-justice notions of freedom which are premised upon a highly individualistic notion of self. This neo-liberalism or libertarianism (Freeman, 2001) is rooted in the rights notions of Locke and in its interpretation by writers such as Dworkin, Rawls and Nozick. Although Rawls and Nozick are at opposite ends of liberalism – one arguing that material difference should be minimised, the other that the state has few legitimate reasons to take from the rich to improve the lot of the poor – they both develop their case from the point of view of individual rights and liberties, and both assume that the individual is ultimately the unit who can make claims on public resources and to whom claims can be granted.

In this they concentrate on instrumental, value-free acts of a self-concerning egocentricity which leads to what Lawson calls “preference individualism” (1998:65). This individualism is concerned with the protection of the individual’s rights of free choice and self-interest. However, these choices are not burdened with the necessity of a worthy purpose. The rights are conferred in the choice, not in what is chosen.

Individuals are thus primary and society secondary and, as MacIntyre concludes, this may lead to a view that “the identification of individuals’ interest is prior to, and independent of, constructions of any moral or social bonds” (1993:250).

This apparent value-free principle supports what Taylor refers to as the “neutrality of liberalism” (1997:17) where, as he proposes, “one of its basic tenets is that a liberal society must be neutral on questions of what constitutes a good life” (1997:17-18). This does not, as Jonathan points out, mean that “neutralist liberalism is thus devoid of moral content, but that content is restricted to procedural principles such as impartiality, tolerance and respect for individual freedom,” (1997:185). These are negative principles of non-interference<sup>15</sup> and can lead to criticisms of relativism and non-productive élitism<sup>16</sup> and may, as they have in the UK, begin to lose their support in certain quarters.

#### **4. MASS HIGHER EDUCATION**

The shift to mass higher education has been accompanied by a loss of confidence in the intrinsic educational values of the university sector from within government and the mass media. In response, the sector’s regulator has sought to build a new, alternative form of confidence based on explicit management accountability. Trow has suggested that this “managerialism as understood by the central government in Britain is a substitute for a relationship of trust between government and universities, trust<sup>17</sup> in the ability of the institutions of higher education to broadly govern themselves” (1994:11). He concludes that the instrumental assessment mechanisms which give substance to the control of funding would have a great influence on the direction and work of the universities and the departments being assessed. Confidence in this form of economically-efficient mass higher education requires reliance on it as a means to the end of economic exchange.

A disembodied notion of educational quality thus instigates the conversion of institutions of culture into manufacturers of credentialised potential employees. Standish’s well-argued article both confronts the

<sup>15</sup> For an exciting discussion of this concept see Berlin’s (2000) ‘Political Liberty and Pluralism Two Concepts of Liberty’ in Hardy and Hausheer’s anthology.

<sup>16</sup> See O’Hare (1989) for a Nietzschean criticism of liberal higher education.

<sup>17</sup> I interpret trust used in the writings of Trow referred to here as meaning confidence or reliability.



process through which the instrument of suspicion is used to create a notion of standardisation in a way that explores the damaging impact on the subject of quality control. Arguing with the voices of Derrida and Lyotard, Standish states that “[a]greement on technique has often substituted for agreement on matters of substance,” (2002:11), since concern for measuring the form and outcome of the learning process neglects what the learning project is.

Standish sees the force of performativity and the values of cost effectiveness and efficiency promoted in ways that make them seem natural and that renders any opposition to them as misunderstanding, ideological or unrealistic. An example states “we can see a *reductio ad absurdum* of the hollowness of this approach in two UK Government-sponsored new university projects – the University for Industry and the e-university – where both amount to little more than business plans for more efficient ‘clearing houses’ or ‘warehouses’ for information exchange with no community of learners or teacher,” (2002:12). In such institutions, “the pedagogical relation between teacher and the student is understood in homologous terms as a practical instance of the more general relation of subject to object. The teacher gives *eidos*, form and finality, to the student as spiritual material presented for shaping and forming *kata ton logon*, in accordance with an abstract model (Heidegger, 2002:34).

Trow (1996:312) puts it succinctly: “(T)he claim that higher education is losing the trust of the larger society is a convenient one for those who have an interest in increasing the accountability of higher education to the state, and thus its power over the institutions”. The new single national standard assessment regime, coupled with a centrally-controlled mandatory credit accumulation/transfer framework and the growth in competence-based models of education, is evidence of the replacement of empathetic trust with an economic utility model. In the relationship between academia and its source of funds, trust is being replaced by managerial accountability based on performance criteria of a very narrow and short-term kind. Compared with the myopia of this view, Hinett’s vision is penetrating: “Existing paradigms which see assessment as something different from learning can only promote instrumentalism. As a result students are likely to be less able to articulate themselves to employers,” (1995:221).

In the UK, the expansion of mass education has led to the accusation that standards are ‘dropping’ rather than ‘changing’. Supporters of this view might cite the shift in the assessment of the effectiveness of universities, under the economic pressure of post-modern performativity, away from

educational diversity<sup>18</sup> to common economic indicators, away from being universities to becoming other forms of institutions. For instance the widely-chosen indicators of widening participation, completion, efficiency and employment have been benchmarked, according to Coates and Adnett (2003), to reflect the subject mix and entry qualification of individual universities. As they state, difference between, “actual performance and the benchmarks are then subjected to significance tests, the results of which are reported in the published tables. Remaining data limitations, however, restrict the usefulness of these indicators so students and governments wishing to assess relative private and social rates of return or employers trying to proxy the relative quality of an HEI’s output,” (2003:211).

Further, the league tables of teaching, ‘wastage’ and research often shape what is done in individual universities. In a recent comprehensive study of types of league tables within the USA, Canada, Australia, Asia and the UK, Provan and Abercromby (2000) found mixed reaction to the tables publication with many members of the university community condemning them, yet still supplying information when requested. Boycotting of the tables has had, according to the authors, little impact in Canada, Australia and the UK, whereas in the USA and Asia there have been many institutions refusing to participate in the institutional surveys. For instance in 1999 thirty-five universities refused to participate in the Asiaweek survey. The impact of these surveys on student choice and university policy seems to be minimal with only about 10% of USA students claiming the tables are ‘very important’ to making university choices. The effect however, on universities may be more profound with, according to Provan and Abercromby, indicative evidence showing that universities are changing their policies to perform better in the ranking across all five geographic areas. Although they conclude that league tables are a useful tool for the university-bound student – provided they understand their shortcomings – they also claim that beyond their lack of objectivity, “the actual indicators themselves often do not measure what they are intended to measure,” (2000:12).

Measurement of the success or efficiency of education in this way has led Robertson (1997) to refer to a change in ‘the contract’ between the sector and the state. The shift to the instrumental is not just in the outcomes. Course outlines codified in quasi-deterministic form are now requested of all programmes to be taught in UK higher education institutions. The QAA

<sup>18</sup> The issue of the loss of diversity through ideological centralisation which is fused by issues of quality assurance, widening participation, and rationalisation is discussed, forcefully, by Brown (1999).

subject benchmark statements have developed with the performance criteria ideology where learning outcomes are prescribed in the context of employability skills.<sup>19</sup> It can be claimed (as Smith, 2003 does) that learning outcomes and level descriptors let the learner into the secret of what is supposed to be going on and work against the preciousness of the university but this argument does not ameliorate the invasiveness of the economic as being central to the teaching within all disciplines, further fragmenting the notion of the university and offering learning up to the practices of the moulder,<sup>20</sup> although it might question some of the barriers of the disciplines.

The shift is not just in size but also in ideology; from collaboration within a community to self-concerning, self-interested learning used as a means to another role within society where the dominant ideal is to make the capitalist economy more efficient. The universities may still, just, have a special position in society, based upon tradition of seeking to stretch the boundaries of that knowledge but they are rapidly foregoing the sanctuary for society's imagination that this represented. There is a perception, typified by the view of Halliday, "that education might be concerned with things other than preparation for work and that these may be seen to have been largely jettisoned in Britain," (1996:41).

Universities have not been exempted from the social predominance of the performativity criterion. They are having to face, according to Lyotard, questions from standards, as well as industry and the State, regarding their legitimacy as providers of knowledge and learning opportunities. The questions asked of them are no longer those of novice scholars concerned with emancipation and the human spirit but of professionalist students whose motivation is 'What use is it?' rather than 'Is it true?' As Lyotard states, "In the context of the mercantilization of knowledge, more often than not this question is equivalent to 'Is it saleable?'" (1993:51).

In response to performativity, the clusters of aims and values that create the very function of our higher education system are rapidly having to be reconstituted. Changes in form and structure are driven by the expansion and diversification of a now fickle student body which has made higher education mass.<sup>21</sup> Higher education through institutional audits may become

<sup>19</sup> As Morley aptly puts it, "the employability discourse is a one-way gaze with truth claims that problematise the capital of students while leaving the cultural and social capital and employment practices of employers untouched," (2001:137).

<sup>20</sup> See Allen and Axiotis (2002:35).

<sup>21</sup> McNair (1998) proposes a radical revision in the form of higher education in response to the new characteristics of the population of students it now services, framing higher education as 'Adult higher education' to reflect the shifts in age profiles of students. McNair calls for the reshaping of higher education around a lifelong learning agenda.

regarded as fit for purpose only when it equips graduates, cost effectively, with the skills for employment in a wide range of occupations, crafts and professions and sidelines its contribution to the student 'being educated' in order to maximise the speed to market of these skill 'carriers'. In this changing context the university's Enlightenment<sup>22</sup> ethos of a committed learning community is challenged by the gauntlet of mechanism and the champion of competencies. To question these changes is not to deny that the fiscal responsibilities of running a university have to be satisfactorily executed but to wonder at what cost they are bought in humanitarian and educational terms. Burnham (2000), in an interesting book on management fads, argues that management strategies aimed at improving institutional performance are typically rooted in a broader context. The adoption of management strategies typically occurs because of external pressures on colleges to improve performance and accountability (see Middaugh, 2001 for an attempt to argue that, given the external environment colleges need to use such a narrative to represent themselves well in the light shone by such discourse) but they often fail because they don't get the support of institutional administrator or faculty. Management fads die a predictable death for they rarely become a shared platform for institutional operation and performance. Put simply, if neither faculty or administrators recognise the importance of institutional effectiveness initiatives for institutional improvement and self knowledge, it is unlikely that they will succeed in any enduring way.

The processes reported above are examples of the libertarian approach to education where contract and property hold sway. Education is contracted to deliver certain quanta or units of education under external quality assurance contracts, students own their credentials, universities and corporations own the intellectual rights of research and the market determines the allocation, fair or otherwise, of resources. All that matters is that the contractual obligations are met and contracts at their core require considerations – property – to ensure their validity. In such an environment it is of little surprise that the student wants to own his/her education and not be it.

<sup>22</sup> I have taken the enlightened project in education to be one where reason's potential is the subject of education and stands as a universally-shared capacity of humanity.

## 5. LESS TRUST, MORE ACCOUNTABILITY AND RIGHTS

Some manifestations of the concept of rights, particularly consumer rights, in higher education can be seen in the move to structure consumable education through modularization, semesterisation and self-directed learning. I propose that this leads to education being dealt with as a commodity. The sense of ends rather than means that this confers is most visible in outcome-driven education. Here process is incidental and the outcome sought is not an educated person in the classical sense but an accredited person able to use his educational outcomes (or competencies) to further his economic desires. As Jarvis states, achievement is not then about ontological development but about gaining a qualification as “a sign of ownership of the (education) commodity” (1995:30, parenthesis added). The centrality of self-interest produces an educational condition where tutors’ own interests have primacy for them and can lead to students’ experience suffering through lack of preparation, reduction in contact time, sloppy assessment and an increase in inappropriate self-directed learning.

The same principles can be applied to the relationship between the institution and its staff when the institution pursues its own interest and seeks greater efficiencies by increasing workloads. The model collapses when the students fail to fulfil their expectations and the confidence of the community is eroded. It may lead to the rejection of deep, intrinsic learning and personal development through the search for scholarly excellence and replaces these with attributes of education which are instrumental in terms of success in employment. Dexterity and employability skills become the drivers of choice rather than critical reflection on one’s own learning. Indeed such moves are making the existing university curriculum look more disintegrated, dissipated or over-specialised. This form of owners’ (industry and commerce) rights-driven libertarianism is not suited for the development of existential trust, but shares with classical liberalism a dependency on competence of trust.

The compression of intrinsic educational goals to extrinsic employment prospects has led to the vocationalisation of curricula and specialisation in higher education in the 1990s.<sup>23</sup> The potential loss is the intrinsic worth of

<sup>23</sup> I would note the less than positive mention by Heidegger, in his 1939 lectures on Nietzsche, of him reading in a newspaper that ‘packing parcels’ was listed as a subject ‘suitable’ for a ‘science taught at the university level’. He indicates this is “not simply a ‘bad joke’” ... but part of “a process whose metaphysical ground lies in the fact that knowledge and knowing are conceived of as *technē*,” (1991:20).

learning that is at the centre of classical liberalism. Libertarianism has replaced the notion of ‘what ought I to do?’ with that of ‘what do I need?’ This has become the platform for the right of higher education for all, managed through market principles rather than under pedagogical guidance or the morality of fairness. It has turned students into consumers and educators into service providers. It has taken the liberal emphasis on promoting individual rights to support the concept of a personal good life in isolation from the “important role that communities play in the development of meaning and morality,” (Feinberg, 1995:36). It has drifted to a point where the ‘skills talk’<sup>24</sup> of employment has taken centre stage in higher education, dwarfing any other aims proposed by Robbins or Dearing<sup>25</sup> and changing the humanitarian ideal of liberalist education into a necessity of economic and political imperatives. In doing so the élitism of liberal study has been retained for some, but the curriculum of the masses has been technicised to provide a different, inferior educational experience from the privileged, liberal position as supported by the Russell group of universities.

Further, as Katter (2002) reflects, “students perceive their role more as clients rather than students, their willingness to litigate for perceived or actual misrepresentations or defects in the delivery of service increases,” (2002:390). In his paper relating the issue of negligence to higher education into two fields, one leads to personal, physical injury and the other is educational malpractice. Citing a growing literature, the ground for negligence seems related to the inadequacy of higher education in general and specific negligence acts. The first, although central to the argument made here has proved problematic for litigation, the second less so. The basis of the second is of concern. The emergence of litigation will lead to a closing off of creativity and risks converting faculty into procedure-driven instructors who owe a duty of care to the procedural mechanisms of their institutions. This duty goes beyond their professionalism to a duty of instrumental care where reaction to students is based on distance not commonality. Such a relationship is guarded and is based on the equation of exchange.

Learning for its own sake and learning for vocational purposes need not be conceived as mutually exclusive activities, since they both point to the commonality of the intrinsic pleasure and satisfaction of study. Winch

<sup>24</sup> For an interpretation of the aims of higher education based on the Dearing Inquiry into Higher Education see Blake et al. (1998).

<sup>25</sup> Should this observation be correct, then the chance of success in a liberal education concept of lifelong learning is likely to fail, for it will only perpetuate the instrumentality of learning and further alienate individuals from their society through individualistic modes of study.

(1995) agrees that any distinction between liberal and vocational education is unhelpful.<sup>26</sup> His position is based on the responsibility of higher education to offer moral premises and opportunities for the development of autonomy to all those engaging in a relationship with it. The sentiment behind this statement is illustrated by Winch when he says, “vocational education will often have a moral, aesthetic and artistic dimension to it. Someone who received a vocational education for a profession, trade or craft should have developed a considerable degree of autonomy,” (1995:406).

The institutional response to managing this risk (surely it is not a risk to education or learning but a risk to the financial returns of the institution) is the use of disclaimers, procedures and insurance.

Some would say this increased accountability is healthy if it leads to greater transparency, and with this I have no argument. However, I suggest that accountability is no longer the servant to greater openness that it implies, but the tool through which greater ideological control, based upon instrumentality, is being exerted. It provides reduced motivation for innovative creativity, autonomy and authenticity. Indeed, its commercialisation is changing the university from a learning community to one whose function is to render the ‘Lure of Technique’.<sup>27</sup> Scott has concluded that, should universities compete solely on the basis of instrumental knowledge creation and data processing, then “*higher education is dead* – in the sense that it is nearing the end of its useful life as a category,” (1997:16). Scott’s position is that in the ‘knowledge society’ there will be a shift away from centres of defined knowledge production to an environment in which information is widely available and where “all kinds of organisations will be learning, and researching, organisations. They will have to be once knowledge is acknowledged as the primary resource. So rather than elevating higher education to a position of even greater importance, the knowledge society may simply spawn more and more powerful rivals,” (1997:22).<sup>28</sup> The economic reliance of universities’

<sup>26</sup> Lewis (1997) takes a different line. Although accepting that a curriculum content which develops ‘vocational literacy’ should be generally available, post-compulsory education should be about employment, with employment flexibility being the focus of liberalism in its delivery. Another view which places the creative process of work at the centre of the education experience, albeit only developed at the compulsory level, is that of Freinet (1993).

<sup>27</sup> This is borrowed from the title of Dunne’s 1997 excellent discussion of *phronesis*.

<sup>28</sup> Perhaps Scott’s position is not too different from Oakeshott when he wrote, “A university will cease to exist when its learning has degenerated into what is called research, when its teaching has become mere instruction and occupies the whole of an undergraduate’s time, and when those who came to be taught come, not in search of their intellectual fortunes but with a vitality so unaroused or so exhausted that they wish only to be provided with a

commercial interests is no longer sheltered by the link of pure research generated by academic institutions and then externally commercialised. Corporations are foregoing this link and building their own selective, patented-knowledge society.

## **6. MANAGERIALISM AND VOCATIONALISM AS THE SUBSTITUTE FOR TRUST**

Take for example the movement towards vocationalism<sup>29</sup> in mass higher education, which has had at least two pronounced effects on undergraduate programmes. The first is an increasing dependence upon the use of occupational standards in course design. These standards embody the past and ignore the notion of what the workplace might become.<sup>30</sup> They are historic, anchoring both learning and the individual within the being of others: the individual becomes the object for the standards. In this sense they may be considered to be the antithesis of higher education. Their most clear manifestation is concerned with technique rather than know-how.<sup>31</sup> The second is the adoption of a form of technicism through assessment of explicit behavioural outcomes.<sup>32</sup> The application of ostensibly scientific practices removes professional interpretation and ties competencies to the achievements of behavioural outcomes based on occupational standards.<sup>33</sup>

In a penetrating essay relating to this scientism as it is manifest in Competence Based Education and Training (CBET), Usher (1997) claims that, read as a text, CBET represents a seduction in the sense of engendering a tension in educators between their own power and powerlessness. Usher locates the learner as a consumer in a discourse which is explicitly geared to producing a multi-skilled and flexible workforce. He concludes: "Education is allotted the task of turning-out the product which is the post-Fordist

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serviceable moral and intellectual outfit; when they come with no understanding of the manners of conversation but desire only a qualification for earning a living or a certificate to let them in on the exploitation of the world." (Oakeshott, 1989:104).

<sup>29</sup> Hyland states "since the early 1970s there has been a 'Vocationalisation' of education at all levels in response to rising youth unemployment, economic globalisation of markets and the post-Fordist industrial re-structuring" (1997:99).

<sup>30</sup> See White's (1997b) discussion of work, its future nature and its necessity in personal well-being.

<sup>31</sup> This separation is explored in more detail as an hermeneutical problem by Bernstein (1983:144-150).

<sup>32</sup> McLeish pointedly comments, "Existentialists would denounce these assumptions as a bureaucracy of the spirit" (1990:4).

<sup>33</sup> Competencies may be seen as a technical paradigm.



economy consumers – that is, enterprising, consumption-oriented individuals with the appropriate attitudes and pre-dispositions, flexibility and competencies” (1997:109).

Both these developments could contribute to criticism of universities as offering a covert, manipulative discourse to students which is being imposed by industry and government’s centralised ideology. It is a threat which is already embedded in some subjects through the power of professional bodies and the sector skills councils to accredit universities’ own curricula to ensure entry into a profession. Indeed it seems that degree programmes are ever more under the scrutiny of accreditation bodies and are being pushed further in that direction by higher education’s own self-regulator, the QAA, in its recent recommendations.<sup>34</sup> Reflection, involvement, evaluation and monitoring are acts of autonomous thinkers of the type industry claims to want. However, this claim illuminates the paradoxical rhetoric of industry, since autonomous thinkers are likely to harm the performance of their managers through challenging their self-interest, exploitative ideology and competence.<sup>35</sup> This is not to argue for traditional disciplines but, as Pelikan points out, to embrace the scholarship of new disciplines for “only the painstaking exercise of discipline illuminated by imagination, and of imagination channelled by discipline, can lead to the rediscovery of an authentic humanism” (1992:18). Surely scholarship ought to be the practical domain of any academic?

Managerialism’s reliance upon competencies and competence of trust may have something to contribute, but offers no context for existential trust without which, as I will try to show, personal realisation of one’s authenticity is severely inhibited. Should such a view dominate in higher education it would, from my viewpoint, be disappointing. It would fail to facilitate autonomous authenticity which is achieved through the desire to engage with what is yet to be known and reconstituting it as knowable. In so doing those personal, involving beliefs and values are used, aesthetically, as an architecture for what one intends to be. It would make no contribution to an increasingly complex society in which higher education pursues fulfilment of the serious need for an ethical environment that consistently asserts the importance of human dignity, confronting issues such as racism, freedom of expression, alcohol and drug abuse, sexism, homophobia and academic dishonesty. It is tempting to suggest (at least in some quarters) that universities’ best response to these issues is one based on maximising

<sup>34</sup> See the QAA discussion document on implementing quality standards.

<sup>35</sup> Seemingly this is a view more elegantly expressed of education in general by MacIntyre and Dunne (2002:1-3).

efficiencies and financial success through the economies of scale secured by standardised products. This seems self-defeatingly limited.

The change in the purpose of the students' learning experience caused by managerialism is broadly from one where the students form a future from the judgements they make, to one of training to fit into one predominant social role. This is indicative of the Sartrean shift of learning for-itself to learning for-others. It creates the production model of education best suited to central control and planning. The consequences for personal development are made explicit in Taylor's analysis of modern society, where the self becomes disengaged from social identity in a form of individualism which sees others as means to a personal end rather than according them the Jaspersian respect they are due.<sup>36</sup> It manifests itself in forms of hedonistic instrumentality where "understanding right and wrong was a matter of dry calculation, *rather than* anchored in our feelings," (Taylor, 1997).

The alienation of feeling outside a world in which one acts can be ameliorated by finding comforting rituals and beliefs which standardise and make understandable the world as it appears in inauthentic discourse with others. Cooper, too, is critical of a society which has been overcome by a manifestation of managerialism: technicism.<sup>37</sup> He suggests that in our state of post-modernity our "reference to values, wants and goals is refracted through the technicist prism" (1983:44). This detaches the naturalness with which we could (indeed, according to him, should) relate to our environment and replaces it with an instrumentality that sees everything as an available resource, moral issues as resolvable problems and education as a training in a society of 'getting' rather than being.

However, the mantra of efficiency in managerialism has found a receptive home in those who wish to control the development of institutions under the competitive advantage notion of focus, cost advantage and differentiation. Meyer (2002) writes compellingly from this perspective about the inability of educational institutions to respond to change – external corporatisation that is. The adoption of managerial cultures, however elegantly phrased, does nothing to hide the essential desire to shift the project of higher education to the production of measurable knowledge. This entrapment is nothing more than an enframing of higher education.

Dearlove (2002) argues that colleges are able to overcome the implicit dichotomy outlined in this chapter between liberal collegiality and

<sup>36</sup> "Respect is indispensable to education" (Jaspers, 1960:63).

<sup>37</sup> "By 'technicism' I mean the broad, but identifiable, idea that the technological power at men's disposal is the fundamental feature of our times, and that their energies should primarily be directed towards utilising the power for the sake of increased material welfare," (Cooper, 1983:36).

managerialism as mode of organisational co-operation by better collaboration of academics and administrators.<sup>38</sup> This fails of course when he sets his argument in the context of “universities are in the knowledge business,” (2002:267). Bringing harmony to an organisation does not necessarily benefit it; harmony of the mediocre has no place in the realisation of personal well-being through seeking the good life.

This enframing fails at the level of explicit transfer. Bennett (2002) argues that the assumption that higher education can easily benefit from private enterprise practices is not well founded. In the void between the notion of external accountability and personal responsibility it is managerialism that has been sucked into the vacuum. Its applicability has been masked by its ability to break the offer of assurance to governments concerned with measurable outcomes of institutions rather than the worth of their existence. Indeed the extent of the entrapment of the managerial panacea can be seen in the active canvass of the Vice-chancellors of UK universities asking, and then applauding, government to create a management college for them to learn to be managers. In their press release to celebrate the announcement by the UK government of such a plan in their White Paper, ‘the future of higher education’, the vice-chancellors stated, “we are pleased that the government will finance our proposals for a leadership foundation to help university management meet the competitive challenges that the White Paper describes,” (Universities UK, 2003). Universities do need leaders but their job is not to lead into a sanctioned commercial future but to lead and resist where others fail to do so. Their job is to lead towards what the academy might be, not what others wish to form it to be nor to realise the university in harmonious acquiescence to external forces of meritocracy and equivalencies. As Heidegger states, “despite the university’s efforts to maintain a theoretical detachment from state and market interests, secularization does not result in independence from values but the replacement of one set of religious values with other, more abstract ones,” (2002:43).

The massification of higher education, the rising tide of vocationalism, the implications of the RAE on research directions and the higher education White Paper has shifted all universities toward the values of the market and a model of disembodied notions of excellence. It produces a way of being that is reminiscent of modelling not of becoming; it fails to provide what might be higher education

<sup>38</sup> Chan, 2004 address the notion of co-operation in Higher education in a wide ranging article and concludes that, “international university cooperation will be one of the keys, if not the only one, to survival in the increasingly borderless world”, (2004:52).

## **7. LIBERALISM AND ILLIBERAL LIBERTARIANISM**

How well has the liberal idea of education been able to resist the confusion of the concept of education with that of training for an occupation? As O'Hear (1989) has pointed out, Newman's liberal university education is, in the broad sense, teaching undergraduates a way of responding predictably to the world; a way which concentrates upon the cultural and educative role of education rather than specific, instrumental training for a vocation or occupation. This purpose has a self-serving resonance with a more contemporary definition offered by Jonathan, in that its overriding aim "is the development of individual autonomy of each for the eventual social benefit of all" (1995:93-94). Translated into the function of an institution designed to facilitate this form of education one would expect to see moral responsibility and a cultivation of the intellectual as the tone and character of the institution. It ought to provide the opportunity to submerge oneself in the wisdom of others and emerge a little wiser. It is an educational process which fits badly with a resource-constrained mass higher education system, in that it is grounded in an ideal whose privileges are not generally available for all and which disengages from the world to offer its educational experience.

This classical liberal argument rooted in the principles of freedom, equity and justice influenced the writing of Newman and much of the subsequent rhetoric for the purpose of higher education since. At the centre of its social mission is the coherence of a structure which favours the public good.<sup>39</sup> Its manifestation is in the utilitarianism of Mills, where responsible autonomy is that which considers the need for benevolence towards others as highly as one's own self-interest. In such an environment, concepts of autonomy and freedom are a result of committed membership of a society with shared values into which one is initiated. Individualism is explicable only in terms of the community (albeit a very exclusive and privileged cadre).

Liberalism might therefore be seen as a commitment to the idea of procedures, of some kind of conformity which establishes truth through rational empowerment but still a truth revealed in a specific social context. This assertion contributes to one of the basic paradoxes of liberalism, in that its emancipatory vision has to be seen in a social context that has a particular

<sup>39</sup> This seem still to be the idea behind the signatories to the Bologna Agreement where, according to Nyborg, 2003, there is general agreement of the role of private education can play in national systems but that it should not render the social and political dimensions of a State's public good obligations powerless.

normative version of emancipation and, indeed, of equality.<sup>40</sup> Liberalism thus draws heavily upon the idea of disciplined thinking that is implicit in the whole idea of knowledge-based curricula and upon academic disciplines. It does however seek to widen the range of educational experience by advocating cultural and humanitarian perspectives to be included in the purpose of education.<sup>41</sup> It sees education as good in itself, not just something to further good, and those who have had this educational advantage “have a clear duty to share their advantages, wherever possible, with their fellow human beings who for one reason or another have been denied them” (Paterson, 1996:11).

The liberal convention of rationalism is also not without its concerns, for it leads to a culture of either/or relationships with assumed established identities. As Garrison points out it “lacks the rhythmic temporalities required to comprehend the idea of an emergent personality or the creative process of improving response. It is a logic suitable only for fixed selves incapable of growth through sympathetic reaction and creative response” (1997:46). Another issue which liberalism has difficulty in accommodating is its central claim to equality (Lawson, 1998). Equality in what, at what level and in what circumstances? In the educational context this issue is manifest in a range of problematic utilitarian issues such as; equality or excellence, altruism or self interest, and neutrality or normative values in regard to moral behaviour.

The solution for higher education and many other institutions to these issues has been the adoption of libertarianism. It is commonly held that libertarianism is a liberal view; however, Freeman (2001) argues that its “resemblance to liberalism is superficial; in the end, libertarians reject essential liberal institutions. Correctly understood, libertarianism resembles a view of liberalism historically defined against itself, the doctrine of private political power that underlies feudalism. Like feudalism, libertarianism conceives of justified political power as based in a network of private contracts. it rejects the idea, essential to liberalism, that political power is a public power, to be impartially exercised for the common good,” (2001:107).

Libertarianism has no place for government to enforce the provision of public goods, those goods not adequately and effectively provided for by markets. The role of the libertarian state is exclusively to protect and

<sup>40</sup> Commenting on the liberal nature of American education Arendt pointed out that “Meritocracy contradicts the principle of equality, of an equalitarian democracy, no less than any other oligarchy,” (1968:180).

<sup>41</sup> For a concise description see Carr (1995:109-114) and Peters (1973).

maintain rights and entitlement against infringement, to enforce contractual agreements, and to resolve disputes. It does this through the processes of the market through managerialism. Thus liberal values in higher education are subverted under the cloak of libertarianism and presented as if from the same value set. Freeman's revealing essay highlights the falseness of such an assumption. The decline in communities of practice seems linked to the increased notion of self-interest and the libertarian rights of contract and property. To fit into this model education becomes commoditised, valued (in a monetary sense) and delivered under contract. This model is untenable with education as the unknowable of personal development but is appropriate for a market in human capital traded through the currency of credentials. As Bourdieu suggests in the preface to his and Passeron's important 1990 text, they fulfil in a different historic context "a social function quite analogous to that which befell nobility titles in feudal societies," (1990:x).

The next chapter questions the worth of the libertarian manifestation of rights of contract and property as a form for higher education.

## Chapter 3

# THE MARKET METAPHOR – A GOOD BASIS FOR TRUST?

*“Colleges and universities are so slow to respond to the needs of business and industry and have lost so much of the business education marketing to training companies. When businesses have a need for educating their employees, their planning time frames are in weeks or months, while those of higher education are in years,”* Sperling and Tucker, 1997:58.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Liberal university education as a notion of education and its move (progress is surely questionable) to massification through the ethos of managerialism was explored in the previous chapter. However, this shift is not self-generating from the needs of a learning community; it is caused by the repositioning of higher education as a form of private rather than public good which for some sees universities losing their resonance as social and domestic agents. This shift has seen the corporatism of universities and the rapid growth of corporate universities that, at least, contribute to the patterning of current higher education as extrinsic and, lacking intrinsic values, potentially leads to a form of market nihilism.

However, embracing the notion of a corporatism in universities carries the potential to exacerbate the current eroded state of curriculum design and

content.<sup>42</sup> This results from particular professions injecting curricula with prescribed subject matter as the *quid pro quo* for awarding accreditation status to degree programs and the need to compete with other institutions for fee income and other revenues. Most universities now operate in environments where, increasingly, students are described as customers, education as a product and the domain in which universities operate as an education market. In this market, trust is evidenced by brands and external controls. Confidence is externally managed and controlled but this often leads to a lack of trust because these very measures that engender confidence are not transferred to an internal locus of trust.

## 2. EDUCATION DEFINED THROUGH MARKETS

In an insightful discussion of the concept of the market, Tooley distinguishes between the notions of ‘education for the market’ and ‘markets for education’. It is the second that will concern us here for Aronowitz (2000) has written compellingly about the ‘learning factory’ which for him has been the result of the former. Tooley (2000:16) defines markets in education as “Educational opportunities delivered by markets, i.e. not provided, largely funded or largely regulated by government, with supply-side liberated and the price mechanism in place”. This apparent value-free market principle supports what Taylor refers to as the “neutrality of liberalism” (1997:17) where, as he proposes, “one of its basic tenets is that a liberal society must be neutral on questions of what constitutes a good life,” (1997:17-18). This does not, as Jonathan points out, mean that “neutralist liberalism is thus devoid of moral content, but that content is restricted to procedural principles such as impartiality, tolerance and respect for individual freedom” (1997:185). But as O’Hear warns us, markets of this nature assume “nothing beyond material existence, and that there is nothing sacred beyond the satisfaction of desire,” (1999:162).

The adoption of this model of the market for higher education institutions and its accompanying discourse of marketing is based on a manifestation of the concept of rights, particularly consumer rights, and can be seen in the move towards structured, consumable education through modularization, semesterisation and self-directed learning. This leads to education being dealt with as a commodity and, as a commodity, it is marketable.

<sup>42</sup> For instance a recent report in the UK on industry higher education links recommends that “Government should ensure that Sector skills councils (employee dominated bodies) have real influence on university courses and curricula,” (Lambert Review, 2003:128).



The economic market is based on the poorly established yet hegemonic and underlining principles of utilitarianism and rationality inherited from the Enlightenment which underpins the market yet never really or fully explains the behaviour of man either separately or through the idea of the market. In the final analysis, if the governing force behind all our actions is the satisfaction of ultimate economic goals and desires we run the risk of stripping humanity of its very essence. The determinism conveyed by the market denies for many the freedom to operate under their own free will and, if I am right, would have considerable implications for education's role in the realisations of individuals' well-being.

To succeed in blending the possibilities of becoming as humanity is to seek human well-being that spans both moral and prudential aspects of life; a life generally in-the-world, a life of *praxis* rather than just one of contemplative transcendentalism or self-indulgent interest. It is an existence which functions in-this-world, the well-being of which necessarily requires sufficient resource to sustain itself at a level which is determined by its engagement with others. It is a notion that is clearly political as well as moral. It involves the just and fair distribution of resources and access to them to secure one's well-being. A single notion of a market as a mechanism for the allocation of goods for private consumption does seem myopic for anything that is not commoditised or physically consumable.

To follow this argument would lead us to assume that some issues that are distinctly part of our cultures need realisation outside the economic market mechanism. One of these is the moral obligation implicit in social relationships, such as educational practices, to enable individuals to realise their potentials through their personal freedoms and, in a culture that values the notion of humanity, to be a precursor to engaging in *informed* economic activity. Sen (1999) makes a strong argument for the provision of basic freedoms so as to allow, in a democratic environment, the practices of civil right and political liberties. Sen (1999:18) writes about developing countries, proposing that "the success of a society is to be evaluated, in this view, primarily by the substantive freedoms that the members of that society enjoy,".

This evaluative position differs from the informational focus of more traditional normative approaches, which focus on other variables, such as utility, or procedural liberty, or real income. To so focus requires institutions (whether the World Bank or educational institutions) which can bring about and secure public and private benefits. If we were to accept that the individualisation of the market has no incentive to consider others in its state of neutrality then clearly it is an inappropriate instrument for social justice if it is to be defined in terms other than those derived from the market. Without such an existence, external to the market, authentic relationships

based on compassion and respect rather than contract cannot flourish. This flourishing is, I propose, central to the project of higher learning and ought to be nurtured in higher education institutions.

### **3. MARKETING OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

Most educational institutions recognise that they do need to 'market' themselves under market conditions and, to help them, a substantial literature of the transfer of the practices and concepts of marketing from other sectors to Higher Education has appeared. A quick trawl of the recent educational literature produces plenty of advice on the market attractiveness model and the few voices raised against its appropriateness (see Gibbs, 2002). The impressive list of publications on the marketing of higher education has, at its core, the transfer to education of technical notions of consumption but what it most lacks is questioning whether the notions that underpin consumption models in other sectors transfer to an understanding of what is involved in education. Initial success does suggest some overlap, particularly if education is viewed as acquisition, ownership or consumption. However, I will try to argue that if education is more than consumption, having more to do with being, then our current models are not sufficient for our future needs. Not only am I concerned that the consumption premise is wrong but that by leaving the question unasked we perpetuate a form of education that the marketing tools themselves reveal. This is an important issue if our efforts are not to be misdirected by the market metaphor into educational management practices of a philosophy of doing business. The theme of this chapter is to question whether our current marketing concepts are appropriate for an inclusive 'becoming', learning society or destined to consumerise education with a resultant privileged market distribution of benefit rather than one based on humanitarian principles of a general well-being.

The literature on the beliefs of marketers influencing the notion of the service they market is limited, and non-existent regarding educational marketing. What little there is tends to concentrate on how the marketers ethically execute marketing strategies and around the subject of the service or product being marketed; prostitution or child labour products. In this the literature fails to explore how marketers' beliefs influence the aspects of products and services which are changed in the process of marketing them. This is not to suggest any deceit or to question professional veracity, just to recognise where judgements are made on personal positions.

For instance it could be expected that educational marketers' own views heavily influence the form and content of the marketing communication

strategies of higher education institutions and, in so doing, shape the views of those who will attend university. Having set the expectation, the institution is inextricably drawn to the marketers' vision of higher education. This is not problematic unless it is at odds with the beliefs of the senior management or the faculty and staff that have to deliver to an expectation of higher education which they do not share.

This is important, for it frames the way in which the university and the university sector communicates its values generally and to its markets specifically. The research will raise many issues of importance to educational marketing and of marketers in the development of higher education institutions. It is timely because of the charter for marketing that seems to be offered in the UK White Paper – the future of universities.

#### **4. WHAT EDUCATIONAL MARKETERS THINK**

The results of a small-scale survey of UK universities concerning the beliefs about the concept of higher education held by institutional marketers seems to bear out my earlier suppositions. (Gibbs, 2003; but see also Menon, 2003 for a review of the literature as it relates to academic views of the institution and the academics' own image of their activities with regard to the purpose of a higher education institution).

Summarising the results I found that marketers envision higher education marketing as advertising and promotion and see their role as promoting higher education as a commodity in an environment that is one of consumerism. Most saw their role as controlling the means of communication with target audiences (advertising and other communication modes) but felt they had little control over the type of student taken by the institution (although they felt they were responsible for market segmentation) and little control of courses which were offered and dropped. The findings also indicate that marketers saw students as their prime target audience for their activities with two other groups; government and institutional donors being important but significantly less so than students when determining the allocation of their marketing efforts.

Marketing does seem to have been broadly acknowledged with the whole community of higher education but not 'embraced' in a full-scale adoption of the notion of market or marketing orientation. Indeed, should it have been fully embraced it would shock and reconstitute what is known as a university – customer power and all that! This is most clearly seen in the lack of speed and readiness of the institutions to respond to change driven by stakeholder demands and does, according to the marketers, create schisms between what is, what might be and what is expected by consumers.

However, there does seem to be a potential coalescence between the views of educational marketers and academics on the purpose of higher education, with educational marketers indicating that higher education's purpose is:

- Service to society (73%)
- A preparation of students for life's challenges (73%), and
- A preparation for careers (60%).

Perhaps the most insightful findings bear on the form of higher education. The marketers clearly hold that market forces ought to be the driving force of modern higher education. Table 1 gives an indication of the strength of opinion that the respondent had regarding a clutch of statements regarding the purpose and role of higher education, the importance of academic freedom<sup>43</sup> and the speed of change needed to keep higher education competitive. There also seems to be a potential conflict in the notion that academic freedom is freedom defined with the constraints of customer demand. This operational definition of academic freedom is symptomatic of the need for control and focus in the delivery of product to the market and is, perhaps, the single most important indicator of the perception of a market-driven notion of higher education and its natural consequence on the nature of higher education. (The negative impact of such changes on faculty of consumerism were identified by Kinman and Jones (2003) on the psychological health of academics. Constanti and Gibbs (2004) have also commented on the negative impact of forced emotional labour of the educational service provider, required of academics under the market paradigm.)<sup>44</sup> Together these opinions favour a student over institutional-and-academic-derived notion of higher education. Which although signal by the market is realised in very few institutions where the hegemony of disciplines, schools and departs still holds sway.

<sup>43</sup> Altbach's (2001) makes a number of very important points regarding the core notion of academic freedom to the essence of what universities and suggests that "without academic freedom, the central work of teaching and research cannot be truly effective," (2001:19).

<sup>44</sup> Indeed this is the case when teachers are required to exhibit emotional labour to appease management and students which results in surplus value accruing to institutions and students (see Constanti and Gibbs, 2003), or the idea that judgements are somehow retaining standards or that degree classifications in some way are compatible across and between institutions.

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*Table -1. Culture of Higher Education as seen by higher education marketers*

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| 86% strongly agreed that student needs were more important than course tradition                         |
| 53% disagreed that pursuing tradition was important in higher education                                  |
| 85% agree faster change would improve higher education   |
| 60% claim academics failed to embrace a marketing orientation  |
| 53% agreed that academic freedom is freedom within the constraints of customer demand<br>(13% disagreed) |

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## **5. IS THE DECISION THEN DIVERSITY, SEGMENTATION AND COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE?**

The UK's higher education system has to decide on what it can or ought to be. It does not have to mirror the corporate nature of universities so evident in the USA. In collaboration with its stakeholders, a re-constitution of the nature of an existentially-driven higher education is possible, although to seek to do this is risky. To do so would mean ensuring that public funding remains a significant contribution to its income and that its activities are for the public and not the private investor's good. Of course we need to recognise that learning is not only for life but also to make a living, but universities can provide an environment of respect for people as individuals not just as objects to count in performance tables, where all parties listen and adapt and where relationships are preferred to trades; a higher education system in which we can, indeed, trust. However, because of their past passivity, they are turning into what Lyotard referred to as producers and mechanizers of knowledge in the context of power-growth: "Is it efficient? Having competence in performance-orientated skills does indeed seem saleable in the conditions described above, and it is efficient by definition. What no longer makes the grade is competence as defined by other criteria: true/false, just/unjust, etc. – and, of course, low performativity in general," (1993:51).

Designing measures of accountability other than financial is more difficult but would cause less difficulty if the evaluation of money spent on education were as a coherent, learner-focused system. Here student experience, recruitment and economic plus personal success could be accounted for in terms of tolerance, integration and good-will without the need to articulate education as a number of qualifications. The stakeholders to the higher education experience are able to determine what they need from the system and how the system ought to respond to them. The current

approach creates marketing problems of credibility and veracity for the institution. To change requires a different way of looking at education but not just in theory. For instance, it is possible that the difficulties encountered by the institution in creating a credit transfer structure are not implicit educational issues but to do with institutions' protective practices encouraged by a market mentality.

The case for treating higher education as a business is evident as state systems embrace the managerialism and performativity that have become the dominant educational business philosophy (e.g. Readings, 1996 and Ortmann, 2001). This is currently illustrated in the case made by the UK Government in their recent White Paper – The future of higher education (DfES, 2003), in particular the emphasis on research excellence leading to viable economic returns development through élite 6\* research departments. It is also seen in the emerging models of corporate universities for instance (e.g. El-Tannir, 2002 and Prince and Stewart, 2002) which might well be a form of such higher educational institutions as will be the private universities built on a derivation of the Humboldt model. More generally, we see higher education responding in ways close to Latchem and Hanna's (2001) suggestion that, alongside the traditional universities, growth will include institutions which are: for-profit, adult-centred universities (Phoenix), distance learning-based universities (Open), corporate universities (McDonalds), university/industry strategic alliances (Cambridge/Microsoft), competency-based universities (teacher training in the UK) and global multinational universities (Universitas 21).

## 6. CORPORATISM IN UNIVERSITIES

"Institutions of higher education throughout the world are increasingly aware of the importance of working more systematically and productively with community and business leaders in order to create better local economies and, ultimately, better societies" (Hughey, 2003). For sure the industry higher education nexus has become even more important as the blurring of function and responsibility for knowledge production has occurred. The unencumbered and fundamental research of the University of old, available freely to the academic communities has been replaced with the imperative of profitable exploitation of developed intellectual capital. That is not to say that much of benefit has not come from such collaborations. The regenerations of economies by the development of small business spin-offs from universities are a major contribution to many economic regions, where Silicon Valley is perhaps the best example. However, this is a two way engagement and in the UK the chairman of the Lambert Review (2003)

into business/university collaboration concluded that the biggest single challenge lies in boosting the demand for research from business, rather in increasing the supply of ideas and services from universities.

Universities are now facing the competition from the corporatism they have created within their mission from within their sector as well as from other sources such as corporate universities. The market mechanism is, however, inhibited by the centralized government funding and monitoring of the quality of teaching and research. It is intrinsically inefficient since it precludes the operation of market forces by the policy makers and it has left the State-funded university sector in a dilemma. Many institutions have sought to resolve this by actively joining partnerships with the corporate universities to end revenue losses. Others have been under pressure to ‘vocationalise’ their mission and eliminate or shift under-funded programs in favour of introductory, service and scientific curricula. Debates on university curricula are taking place and often commercial interests are at odds with the university curriculum. Colleges and universities have been criticized for selling out to corporate America as training sites for businesses and changing college presidents into full-time fund-raisers who more resemble CEOs than academic leaders (Aronowitz, 2000).

The expansion of functional, accredited knowledge providers – whether formal or informal – shows just how fragile the role of universities are if they lose their focus. Bauman encapsulates the issue well:

“The opening of the information superhighway revealed, in retrospect, just how much the claimed, and yet more genuine, authority of the teachers used to rest on their collective monopoly of the sources of knowledge and the no-appeal-allowed policing of all roads to such sources. It also showed to what extent that authority depended on the unshared right of the teachers to decide the ‘logic of learning’ – the time sequence in which various bits and pieces of knowledge can and need to be ingested and digested. With those once exclusive properties now deregulated, privatized, floated on the public stock exchange and up for grabs, the claim of academia to be the only and natural seat of those ‘in pursuit of higher learning’ sounds increasingly hollow to everyone’s ears but those who voice it,” (Bauman, 1998:23-24)

As Liebeskind and Oliver state, “academic science is one area of human activity where trust – in the form of scientific credibility – plays an essential role,” (2000:118). In an interesting article that has much wider application, the authors discuss the changing notion of trust as the background against which academic endeavour is conducted in an ever-increasing ‘commercial environment’. For instance, the academic credibility of a researcher might be compromised through lax ethics or high personal ambition which lead to

early or late revelation of information which adversely impacts on the academic community of which she is a member. In what Liebeskind and Oliver call 'From the Handshake to the Contract' (2000:126) they identify a number of ways in which the relationships of scientists (biotechnologists) change the relationships between academic colleagues.

The potential for monetary exchange to change the form of publication that scientist work receives is based on the competitive sensitivity of the commercial rights of the discovery. It is clearly to the advantage of a commercial sponsoring organization to delay publication while they capitalize on the finding while delay for the academic community can have impacts on others' work. Commercial interests can make scientists less generous with the attribution of credit when it leads to patents than they might have been when it led to academic acclaim. The final change is in the constraints that proprietary project work might put on how readily researchers can resume similar research in the academic arenas.

The effects of the commercialization of academic scientific research is a restriction on both the depth and breadth of trusting relationships between researchers by creating restraints on informal discussions, increased hierarchical structures and a weakening of collaboration and social trust relationships between academic scientists. The signs of a growing commercialization are not difficult to see. Consider Coca-Cola's activities in US high schools where they run Coke in Education Day complete with a prize for the best plan for marketing coke-sponsored discount cards, lectures on economics by Coca-Cola officials, technical assistance to home economic students baking Coca-Cola cakes, not to mention help in chemistry classes analyzing the sugar content of Coke, and even aerial photographs of the entire student body in Coca-Cola shirts. Bok's position, with which I agree, is:

"The problem of accepting corporate money and involvement seems sufficiently obvious and serious to warrant stopping such support altogether. The likelihood of bias and the appearance of undue influence resulting from current practices are simply too great to be tolerated. Unfortunately, however, decisive action of this sort may no longer be possible," (2002:22).

Accepting that he is talking about the privileged Harvard, even so the message is clear. Corporate influence creates a form of knowledge production that has its place in the higher education diverse community but not in a place dedicated to the goals of unfettered research and scholarly activity. Perhaps its rightful place is in corporate universities.



## **7. PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES**

Private education is not the divider between public and private good in education for it can contribute to both and it does so in measures relevant to each institution's mission. It could, and was argued by Mill (1992:100-103), that the private provision of education is the obligation of the family and not the State who, in its duty provides education only as some sort of last resort when persuasion and coercion fail to find an accountable person. Mill makes the point that the state cannot be trusted with education for it will shape and mould those so educated into the unquestioning ways required to perpetuate its own existence. This argument was realised in a number of countries but, as yet, not in the country of Mill's origin. Yet pressure on the resources of the State are, in many economies, changing the views held of private education.

The labour market has created opportunities for graduates with skills fit for the purpose of the new global economy. In response, higher education worldwide has grown and it has done so through differentiation either by the expansion of the range of existing types of institution or through new types of institution being developed. Private education influence on higher education might, crudely, be divided between those institutions opening in the developed economies of Europe and North America where they are well established and compete in terms of quality with public higher education and enjoy to differing extents subsidies from the public authorities (Chevailler and Eicher, 2002) and those in the developing countries where standards, quality and equality remain an issue.

This is no place to discuss the various merits of public and non-for-profit private higher education and no I make no assumptions regarding their comparative contribution to the social capital of the communities they serve. Many private universities have matured to become some of the most prestigious universities in the world and lead the way in academic freedoms and excellence in research and teaching.

It is towards the for-profit new institutions, particularly in developing countries, where the rise in private education has been dramatic that my concerns are raised. The World Bank estimates that China has more than 800 private higher education institutions and that nearly 60% of Brazil's tertiary-level students are enrolled in private institutions. The figure is up to 80% in the Philippines, nearly that level in Japan but falls to about 20% in the USA and much lower, just one institution, in the UK. This trend is encouraged as deregulation in many countries is stepped up to incorporate private provision in the search to provide a domestic higher education infrastructure. Private higher education is the most dynamic and fastest-growing segment of post-secondary education at the turn of the twenty-first

century (Altbach, 1999:311).<sup>45</sup> The dynamics are the clear financial benefits of that higher education can bring<sup>46</sup> and the expense that is involved for central government to provide the support and fund the required expansion. This is not a new phenomenon with private education dominating higher education in Japan, dramatic shifts in China, Brazil, Mexico and Peru and private education being a fast growing sector in Central and Eastern European countries<sup>47</sup> (about 80% of American students actually attend public institutions).

Accompanying this growth has been a shift in the nature of a degree in both public and private institutions, from being a public good (in China, Guo-Zhi and Rui refer to it as ‘fostering state personnel’, (1993:439)) to a private good that benefits the individual rather than society. This is the fundamental shift, one supported by corporatisation of universities and by private universities. It runs the risk of both undermining notions of trust in the professionalism of the teacher changing the very role of the teacher and the institution. This shift need not be, it is not inevitable, its force comes from those whose own power over knowledge and its manifestation in accredited people is best suited by the shift. We might well benefit materially from such a shift but the case is still far from compelling.

In the opening sentence of their book, the Founder and President of the with-profit University of Phoenix, Sperling and Tucker, declare that they, “recommend that (these) adult-centred universities be organised as for-profit corporations. For-profit universities offer several advantages over non-profit institutions, among which are the for-profit’s accountability for educational effectiveness, operational efficiency, cost benefit, and the time it takes them to respond to changes in the nation’s education needs,” (1997:1). This is the discourse of skills not education, it is the language of human capital and corporate profit it is not the narrative of growth, citizenship and democracy – unless you equate democracy (or what passes for it in the USA) and education. The transparency of the motive and the causal financial relationship between higher skills and income is refreshing but such veracity ought not mitigate the tyranny that it supports. Education constructed on the basis of return on investment is not the project I foresee for the university but it is the direction of travel that many institutions are following.

There is nothing implicitly wrong in linking skills, the cost of acquiring them and higher incomes, but it should not be the prime goal of education.

<sup>45</sup> Altbach (1999) also provides an excellence review of private education that is not repeated here.

<sup>46</sup> See McIntoch (2002) for a report on returns on academic and vocational qualifications that shows returns of up to 26% for first degree holders.

<sup>47</sup> See Astakhova’s (1997) discussion of the development of private education in Ukraine.

It should not be conducted in universities but in other institutions whose goals are explicitly private or in new dedicated public institutions where instrumental higher skills are developed. Each certainly has a role in the tapestry of economic opportunity but they are not universities. As Maskell and Robinson pragmatically ask, have we created “the tree of knowledge or a shopping mall?” (2001:163).

## **8. CORPORATE UNIVERSITIES**

Corporate universities are educational organizations established and operated by corporations with the purpose of evolving them into dynamic, future-state business development platforms. Their purpose is to enhance the competencies of employees and suppliers and to help customers use the companies’ products more effectively. The World Bank (2002) even suggests that by 2010 there will be more corporate universities than traditional campus-based universities in the world.

General Motors and McDonald’s pioneered the corporate university concept. Now there are an estimated 1,600 corporate colleges in the USA alone and they exist at companies like Motorola, Walt Disney, Sears Roebuck and Microsoft. Many other corporations, even some small to medium sized businesses, are establishing corporate schools. Like the traditional college or university, corporate universities have buildings, classroom courses with instructors, catalogues and even course numbers. In some cases, students receive degrees or certificates for such training. Some companies are now having their programmes accredited so workers can convert some in-house course work into college credits for graduate degrees.

Nixon and Helms (2002), in a rather discursive and supportive article in favour of corporate universities, see the emergence of corporate universities as a response to the changing function of higher education institutions. In this sense they respond faster than universities in a new market where education is defined as the process of learning and work in one activity and it has certainly proved attractive in some markets. Nixon and Helms argue that the growth of corporate universities is due to the dissatisfaction of business with the application of the general education received through traditional educational institutions.

The mission of a corporate university is embedded in the corporate strategic objectives, and the culture of the sponsoring firm. Meister (1998) has identified three core factors in the design of corporate university curricula: corporate citizenship, which delivers the values, vision and culture of the organisation; contextual frameworks which involve knowing customers, competitors and industry trends and practices; and core

competencies. In particular, corporate universities position themselves in direct competition with university Business Schools which, in a number of ways, attempt to differentiate and blur the distinctive features of the corporate university. These include customisation, mode-free learning, up-to-date materials (a previous advantage of research-driven higher education and now acquiesced to corporations as the primary knowledge manager in free-market economies), cost and quality control to the explicit level of the corporation (not necessarily the same definition as for rigorous and critical academic justification), speed and flexibility, and strategic alignment with business goals, specific job skills and leadership.

In an insightful article Prince and Stewart (2002) identify, if only in passing, the main difference between corporate universities and the notion of education proposed throughout this book. Simply, the corporate university is designed for the being of an employee of the firm. The development investment is restrictive in the sense that the form of person, constrained under the vision of the corporation, has been framed. If we borrow from Heidegger's notion of the teacher, in the corporate university he stands as if to form the student. The teacher stands, "*typos*, the mould, from which students will emerge as exemplars. As a verb, *typo* reminds us of the violence of education in subject-object terms, for it has three meanings 'to beat' or to 'pound', as when combating an adversary or, more to the point, pressing a coin," (2002:35).

In this blurring or merging of activities the client demand relationship prevails and the university moves away from educational values it might have held to the values of instrumentality of the corporation. This shift in role might have remained distinctive if it had not invaded the functional differentiation of universities in their awarding of degrees. In the USA there are a growing number of corporate universities which have regional accreditation for their programmes. Crowther and Carter (2002) question more deeply the content as well as the transfer mechanisms of knowledge in the discourse of higher education management studies. Their argument is that management disciplines look inward for their legitimacy which distinguishes them from other disciplines in the academic discourse. Should this analysis be correct then its argument leads to business schools themselves being outside the notion of education proposed here. Indeed, should business schools concentrate not in legitimising new disciplines but in serving corporate customers, their legitimacy could be established without the osmosis of a university ethos.

The notion of education as *paideia* with its vulnerabilities and notion of becoming rather than being is replaced with the *technē* of *poisei*. Experts come to instruct and are evaluated on achieving change in the direction of, and to the extent of, the predetermined goal.

Corporate education is an investment in human capital and the formalisation of the concept under the rubric of the university is to reduce the risk of the return on this investment. Its role is to define the individual in terms of the organisation, it de-humanises the staff member and reaps the benefits through the surplus value that the corporate employee delivers, often willingly, to the organisation in return for their identity being regularly approved of by promotions and further attendance at the university! This is exploitation with the compliance of the exploited.

## **9. CORPORATISED LEARNING AND EXPLOITATION**

Education has value but knowledge seemingly has more. The major changes in policy seem to be in response to the emergence of a distributed knowledge production system. Knowledge production and dissemination – research and teaching – are no longer self-contained activities, carried out in relative institutional isolation. They now involve interaction with a variety of other knowledge producers. Connections will increasingly involve the use of the potentialities of the new information and communication technologies. The challenge is how to get knowledge that may have been produced anywhere in the world to the place where it can be brought to bear effectively in a particular problem-solving context. This requires the creation of a cadre of knowledge workers – people who are experts at configuring knowledge to a wide range of applications. But is this education and what value has this knowledge?

It might be intrinsic and/or, in the more commercial models of education, extrinsic, accounted for in terms of human capital and taking the form of abilities and skills that lead to increased production and economic growth (Stiglitz, 1999). A formal higher education is becoming a prerequisite for an increasing number of careers and occupations and, because of this, educational institutions are responding to a shift from a supply-driven to a demand-driven market. As Meyer suggests, given a “dramatic increase in knowledge-rich companies, higher education institutions no longer enjoy the quasi-monopolistic position of the past,” (2002:549). The extrinsic human capital link has become a justification for the expansion of higher education and gathered an extensive literature that makes various claims as to the strength of the link between higher education, productivity and higher wages. (See the reviews of Blundell et al. (2001) and Kane and Rouse (1995) for interesting USA results, and Trostel et al. (2001) for a European perspective. A comprehensive higher education review is that of Chevalier et al. (2002). In discussing the distinction made by Becker (1964) between

specific skills (for which employers should pay) and general skills (for which they should not), they suggest that they might more readily coincide in such a way that such a distinction is blurred and that:

“Skills provided by higher education qualifications, which are frequently thought of as general human capital, could fall under the category of firm-specific human capital. Moreover, very specific qualifications could have a very limited number of potential employers requiring such skills. This would reduce the level of competition between the few existing potential employers and therefore provide them with more bargaining power than in the standard competitive setting. Thus, it is theoretically possible that wages fail to reflect the full extent of the benefits firms enjoy when their workers have a higher education degree,” (Chevalier et al., 2002:59-60)

When this analysis is considered against the following section of the UK’s White Paper, the shift from defining higher education skills as ‘general capital’ to ‘specific capital’ seems very clear:

“Our overriding priority is to ensure that as we expand higher education places, we ensure that the expansion is of an appropriate quality and type to meet the demands of employers and the needs of the economy and students. We believe that the economy needs more work-focused degrees – those, like our new foundation degrees, that offer specific, job-related skills,” (DfES, 2003:60).

The question for this section is whether the employers get what they deserve or merit from this government policy. In a review of the economic literature Chevalier et al. (2002) argue that return on investment as human capital rarely coincides with the marginal productivity of workers. Citing many reasons for this they conclude, “wages will end up failing to reflect the full extent of the positive effect of certain skills, such as those acquired by means of pursuing higher education,” (2002:59).

Seemingly, from Chevalier’s analysis, the employee does not enjoy the full extent of her human capital and so any increase in the return to employers which has no commensurate increase in the investment will surely increase their share of the surplus value created by the student and, given the insensitivity of the wage mechanism, leave the employee vulnerable to exploitation by the employer. I will return to this point.

Another source of unrealisable surplus is within the university itself. Given that increases in the aggregate capital accumulation of their students can be improved by the productivity of the resources employed by the higher educational institutions, then gains can be achieved by decreasing the costs of production. This can be done by increasing class sizes, utilising new,

more productive pedagogies and technologies and the use of cheaper labour (in the case of university, the use of temporary faculty). In consequence the cost of developing the human capital of their students is reduced and, if the students' employment value is maintain, this leads to a surplus value being created. Its distribution within the university is well known. Generally it does not go to improve teaching but to supporting research, of which very little is utilised in undergraduate teaching. The prestige of the university is increased, research grants increase and the salaries of the heads of institutions swing upwards but this is hardly a fair distribution of the surplus-value created by the teacher, full or part time, in nurturing the state's and the students' investment in their own human capital.

This leads to another potential form of exploitation – that of charging students excessively in one area in order to use the surplus revenues to support other academic activities. This most notably happens where business and law schools subsidize other faculties. Of course this need not always be the case and, according to Bok (2002), executive education is one such case. Here, if the visible outcomes are good enough to justify the costs then such courses might justify companies paying generous sums to the university. Under these circumstances, far from encouraging exploitation or inferior education, the profit motive attracts more supplies and intensifies a competition that forces them all to improve. However, this does not extend to all forms of short courses or continuing education. Indeed, Bok argues this carries substantial risk for the institution if the courses are launched with the primary aim of making a profit rather than serving some substantial academic purpose.

Giroux (2002) addresses the corrosive effect of corporate culture on the academe. He argues that neo-liberalism is the most dangerous ideology of the current historical movement. He shows that civic discourse has given way to the language of commercialisation, privatisation and deregulation and within the images of corporate culture, citizenship is portrayed as utterly privatised to produce self-interested individuals. He maintains that corporate culture functions largely to ignore or cancel out the social injustices in the social order by overriding the democratic impulses and practices of civil society through an emphasis on the unbridled working of market relations. He suggests these trends mark a hazardous turn in US society: one that threatens our understanding and affects the ways we address the meaning and purpose of higher education.

“As society is defined through the culture and values of neo-liberalism, the relationship between a critical education, public morality and civic responsibility as conditions for creating thoughtful and engaged citizens

are sacrificed all too willingly to the interests of financial capital and the logic of profit making,” (2002:427).

The acquisition of skills and knowledge is analogous to the accumulation of capital and its exploitation in both cases generates surplus value. This position views training in skills as the product of labour, whose value is realised in wages. As wage inflation increases the costs of production, so the cost of accumulating capital for the organization also increases. Firms thus have an incentive to shift related learning costs onto the workers so as to avoid losing the capital invested in a worker who moves to another firm. Conversely, the property rights of workers in their skills are the source of their incentive to invest and accept a temporary reduction in their wages in anticipation of greater returns. However, the marketability of the skills and the realization of the full benefit of their application are dependent on their transferability.

Management, classically, has a number of ways at its disposal to maximize this surplus by buying a worker's labour power to consume its use value – just like a buyer of any commodity. This can be done by the introduction of technological innovations both as the process and the means of production. For our purposes this may mean increasing the cost of labour but increasing its efficiency through training in emotional labour. This increases the surplus value by increasing the output from a given input of labour. However, it ought to require an increased cost (of recruitment, training and support) relative to value, which cuts the immediate increase in value and so limits its short-term impact. This analysis is the bedrock of capitalism and is a long way from establishing a notion of exploitation, and indeed, might better be conceived as distributive injustice. To show exploitation we ought to be able to identify an unfair advantage being taken to exploit the person's abilities, capacities or labour, whilst she is vulnerable to such approaches.

Marx's notion, as embodied in his theory of labour, assumes that its value is determined by the labour time necessary for the production of the outcome. The value thus produced assumes the cost of resources and labour and, where the value of the finished good or services exceeds the costs of production, surplus value is generated. In service engagement, where service charges are implicit (tips) or explicit (service charges), the customer bears some of the expense of the emotional labour and the decision as to the extent of the additional value for the service the employee has rendered. Price is thus not proportional to value and the difference accrues as surplus value to be allocated to management (most obviously in the case of service charge, not tips if retained by the service provider). These demands allow for exploitation both from the customer, who can have unreasonable



expectations, and the management, by encouraging unrealistic service delivery given the price payable to the front-line employee, before the customer assesses the additional value. The issue of exploitation then hinges on whether the service employee is willing to accept the wages of production and the distribution of surplus value, if it occurs. If the employee can evaluate her worth and is satisfied with the return on the labour invested, then she may be satisfied with her condition but still be exploited.

The Marxist analysis has its critics. For instance, Laycock (1999) argues that the concept of exploitation is linked more fruitfully to a conception of distributive injustice than to Marx's theory of surplus value. However, Marx's own definition is a particular instance of the general analysis that makes a number of controversial moral assumptions.

In itself this may be an acceptable activity for institutions to undertake. However, if the emergence of these institution acts to destroy the diversity of mission in higher education institutions then we must be made aware of it. I have written elsewhere of the danger to education of the corporatisation of universities (but not as clearly as Readings, 1996).

## **10. TRUST AND THE MARKET**

I want now to take this argument a little further by looking at the notion of intrinsic trust and how this would be applied to a market model which values public goods in a different way than private. To do this I will grapple with the social theory grounded in Durkheim's notion of pre-contractualism, which I attribute to the communal nature of authenticity of the individual. Given this pre-contractual premise I want to explore the relationship of reliance, or the confidence we have in a social institution delivering what we expect of it. Confidence in social institutions, such as education, allows agents to engage with and act through them but that confidence has to be founded on some belief in their attestable trustworthiness. It is from this that the more enduring and generalised (but less distinct) nature of goodwill grows. It facilitates fairness.

Professional assessment judgements, if they are to be that, have to be made from a sense of fiduciary obligation and responsibility; *this makes the relationship a moral one and not a market transaction*. If all that is in question is the competence of the actions offered by higher education in response to a request, the relationship is one of technical competence located and measured in the present.

Bok (2002) also talks of the market's failure to deliver by driving out bad teaching. His argument is based around an ideology where learning is conceptualised as a product that can be created according to prescribed

inputs. Bok, of course, is not arguing that profit-making markets cannot deliver a higher quality of teaching, just that they can only create beneficial results for education and this only under conditions where, “many providers compete vigorously with one another and when students know their needs and understand how well the available providers can fulfil them,” (2002:12). Although learning in this sense is not supported by my arguments made here, when learning is commoditised within a market discourse yet such a discourse is still unable to deliver notions of quality, then surely we have the right to question whether there is something wrong with the fundamental proposition based on the market? Of course this points to league tables and other public rating systems which have other problems as discussed earlier in the book. The solution seems to be elsewhere, not revealed by sophisticated metrics but through a notion of trust.

As Seligman (1997:44) summaries it, “were trusting acts to be dependent upon the play of reciprocity it would not be an act of trust at all but an act predicated on confidence,”. Trust is thus mainly demanded when consumers feel vulnerable and ignorant. University education is designed to be at the frontier of what is knowable and that requires exploring the social system’s context as it reaches its limits. In this I am following both Luhmann (1990) and Seligman (1997) locating trust at the limits of the social systems that create these institutions and, in so doing, helping to build an argument that higher education and not the accreditation it awards has a public good. For higher education institutions to raise their horizons requires of us that we trust them beyond the knowable.

I wish to propose that existential trust, rather than the markets can act as a frame of reference and might be used to model the relationships of higher education inclusive of the perspective of it as a social institution. Within this, the question as to the importance of existential trust may be settled by the purpose of higher education. Certainly in the purpose of higher education advocated here, the students and faculty have to expose their vulnerability to others and anything other than a moral duty of trusting care would make the offer of education potentially loaded and exploitative. Competency alone would treat the student as a means to the end of instrumental skills suited to employment. Indeed, this could further reduce the goodwill held towards the institution, since actually securing jobs is beyond its own competence. It does, however, suit an economic model. If higher education is to be more than this, it must find time to empathise with the student in the academic community of the university (see Nussbaum, 1997 and Kennedy, 1997). To fail to do this would not warrant either personal or political trust in its special role in the provision of morally aware citizens.

The notion of the market as the centrepiece of economic prosperity and democratic freedom is flawed if it is not built on informed relationships. If an education system is to prepare members of its community to be informed about the market and is not just about being in a market then it needs to encourage critical thinking amongst its members. One place where learners could prepare for this critical reflection might be universities. However, as they accept the notion of an economic market in education they themselves become defined by the market and risk losing the function, as well as the trust, to question 'what is' for 'what might be'. Their capitalisation of culture as a response to the market might be out of fear of loss of reputation and income but institutions have a moral responsibility to resist this. The collective consciousness of the market may hold sway but it might not be right and I argue that both for their own survival and for the interests of their publics, universities ought to have a duty to facilitate higher learners to question the market as the hegemony it has become. To do this it must, to some extent, stand outside the market mechanism itself. By empathetic reflection, learning opportunities and outcomes are revealed through a learning community which at its heart must be trusted by all parties. Indeed, if this trust is not evident, no amount of illusionary symbols of trust will protect the participants from exposure.

## **11. FREEDOM OF ACTION AND COMMUNITY**

At the core of a humanistic vision of education is an attempt to develop good citizens who will both know what is, and do, their duty. In this sense it assumes certain characteristics of our being. Predominantly these are the truth-securing notions of rationality and free will which, when coupled with the commitment to personal autonomy, create an autonomous rationality from which the principles of liberalism become self-evident. It may follow that striving for one's own well-being is achieved through the rational analysis of one's circumstances and the following of rules which determine this form of truth. But how can personal freedom be encouraged, yet an external authority create the domain of free choice? This is potentially problematic for liberal education, since it opens up its principles to the criticism of imposition of rules on personal autonomy which are underpinned by normative notions of authority.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>48</sup> I recognise that in order to make free decisions certain skills need to be acquired and in the proposition is not as clearly delineated as put here.

We now have reached the core of my argument that to realise freedom of action within a just community, the community needs to ensure that its members are well enough informed to participate in the activities of its markets so as to control and not be controlled by their particular nature. Without education, individuals are unable to participate as informed purchasers (which the market assumes they are) in the freedoms that a market economy can deliver, becoming liable to exploitation in some form of economic slavery. And this is the rub.

To sustain the economic market, consumers need the competencies to question the drivers of the market and, in a civilised society, that informed position means more than economic self-interest; it requires a moral understanding of our humanity. The content of the learning process to be thus informed requires a *praxis* built on a curriculum of cultural, moral and humanitarian understanding of one's own society and the respect due to other cultures. This is a form of intermediation and is something that the economic market alone is not well designed to do and is not good at doing. It can match those who sell competencies with those who desire them and does this regardless of how they will be used to exploit a given situation but it cannot engender a notion of right or wrong, good or bad, worthy or worthless other than in the currency of the market. It is, I propose, to education that we should look to contextualise the use as well as the acquisition of new skills in a moral setting.

I am surely moving away from education being a private good and placing it – if not squarely as a public good – then one that straddles private and public. Clearly I do not want to deny that all education, including higher, generally improves financial prospects. Psacharopoulos (1994) shows clearly that in both developing and developed economies education achieves both social and private positive returns on investment. My position then is that higher education contributes to the social well being of its host community and that this ought to be preserved outside the market – upon which no price should be extracted. It is a public good to which everyone has a right but not an obligation to enjoy. This is a concept outside the economic market model previously introduced and it requires of those engaged in the provision of higher education a commitment to an underpinning moral appreciation of their teaching and researching roles. What is more, if this proposition is accepted it requires society to trust its professional academics in a way not verifiable by the instrumentality of the market. It can, indeed ought to, be funded by the results of the market economy but has functions which are outside its procedural realisation and should not be answerable to the market for its humanitarian rigour.

My rationale is based on the assumption that all institutional education ought to carry the moral fabric of society in a way the economic market is

not designed to do. I think most, but clearly not all, might accept that basic education is a public good but to what extent should mass higher education be a public good and thus be outside of the market mechanism? Surely the mere use of the word mass indicates that it is a public good? However this does not hide the danger associated with the conditions under which it is delivered and by whom. Could business provide an ideal model for such education? Should we entrust our education system to market? Before exploring this point I want to develop a notion of trust to inform this discussion. It is a trust which is distinct from confidence and one that engage us in the vulnerability of our futures.

## Chapter 4

# WHAT FORM OF TRUST MIGHT BE APPROPRIATE FOR UNIVERSITIES TO BUILD A *PRAXIS* OF HIGHER EDUCATION DESIGNED TO ENCOURAGE AUTHENTICITY?

*“GARCIN: Will you trust me?”*

*ESTELLE: What a quaint thing to ask! Considering you’ll be under my eyes all the time . .*

*GARCIN: I was thinking of another kind of trust. Estelle, you must give me your trust.*

*ESTELLE: Oh, what a nuisance you are! I’m giving you my mouth, my arms, my whole body – and everything could be simple. . . My trust! I haven’t any to give.”*

Sartre (1990a)<sup>49</sup>

## 1. BUT WHAT IS MY TRUST?

But what is trust that is revealed? Its use in discourse in many everyday contexts gives it various and many meanings. We trust that the motor engineer has correctly tightened our wheel nuts, we trust or rely on our knowledge of the molecular structure of the nut to sustain the strains of driving, we anticipate that other drivers understand the procedures of driving and trust that they are not intent on killing themselves or us. We trust that the police will not abuse their power and we believe in the social structure of

<sup>49</sup> In Sartre’s play ‘In Camera’ the hiding of personal responsibility for actions behind the inauthenticity of social personas is exposed painfully for all to see. No wonder Garcin speaks of his hell as other people!

our society to give us confidence in the due course of law. And we trust that our friends will be true to us in our time of need. In all these situations, except the last, we have expectations of someone or something whose performance against expectation can be confirmed and affirmed regardless of who we specifically are. The bestowing of this form of trust (and indeed, when appropriate, lack of trust) shapes and reduces the general risk and uncertainty of our future. For the purposes of our discussion, this type of procedural trust evidenced as the sufficient discharge of a function is a skill in the *competence of trust*. It is verifiable by us through direct action or reliance on social ritual, sanction and custom but it does not require involvement with us for what we might be: it is not specifically personal.

## 2. COMPETENCE OF TRUST

Competence of trust, when read as the functions of reliance or as social competence, is woven into our social realities as calculable risk reduction.<sup>50</sup> It is premised on the transaction that everyone owes to others in the formation of predictable, co-operative and manageable communities. When our actions are trusted they are trusted in terms of our perceived adherence to the social conventions through which we and our society evolve. We adopt certain values which increase the predictability of our behaviour in novel situations and this increases our effectiveness and efficiency as a political and economic actor. We assume, or are ascribed, certain roles which enable us to devise a predictable schemata of our social actions which, in turn, allow us to pursue the socially endorsed goal of apparent self-interest.

Much of what we take on trust is the consent we give to an already determined future, created by limiting the range of possibilities which form the contents of our social cocoon (see Giddens, 1991). Conventional temporal horizons order our social reality and help to reduce the complexity of our existence by reducing the scope for original and unexpected behaviours. The future becomes no more than the extended present, a series of 'now' events extended to form a future for us sanctioned by others. In this context, trust is used not to facilitate the authentic becoming of being but to support a curious paradox that denies oneself by being defined as oneself by others. It acts to foster reliance on social exchanges which are

<sup>50</sup> See for instance Luhmann, (1979); Barber (1983), Seligman, (1997) and Misztal (1996). Each of these authors attempts to explore the relationship of our future possibilities as a practical dialogue, based on attributed roles, within social institutions.

instrumental and evaluated on the basis of reciprocity of competent outcomes. We learn to trust in our own ability to rely on the coherence in the pattern of predictable behaviours of ourselves and others within a social cocoon. As Williamson<sup>51</sup> describes it, what we understand is “rooted in the tacit agreements with others about how that world is constituted and its function,” (1998:23).

Competence of trust is thus the confirmation of usually rational expectation. From this perspective, competence and reliability are sufficient to cover the risk reduction conferred upon the holder of these skills. Competence of trust functions as a means to an end, a practical imperative; it is the adequate fulfilment of commitments and functions at the centre of social structures. It is the domain of the contractual promise of performance and of the obligation of reciprocity and is unlikely to have authority other than that based on the equalisation of an exchange. Further, competence of trust is based on verifiable evidence which leads Starkey (1989) to conclude that judging acts solely by their explicitness can lead to the calculative expediency of utilitarian equivalencies rather than the discharge of a moral responsibility.<sup>52</sup> As a consequence we are freed from any sense of general obligation to or for others if they are unable or unwilling to reciprocate equitably. This is the egocentric world of Taylor’s post-modern cult of individualism.

### **3. WHAT ARE THE CONDITIONS OF COMPETENCE OF TRUST?**

To be considered as trust competent or skilled at trust, one would be able to fulfil an entrusted task within the norms of a particular role within a culture. In this sense trust is grounded in efficacy, both in deed and in social understanding. Simple requests, such as asking a stranger to oversee your luggage while you leave it for a short period of time, illustrates the point. One has to trust in a general belief that the trustee acknowledges and accepts property rights, that she understands the request, is able to see the case and that there is no overriding benefit to the trustee to take it. One relies upon her acting in accordance with the generally accepted (at least as I understand

<sup>51</sup> Williamson utilises the concept of ‘lifeworlds’ to contextualise the notion of lifelong learning. His arguments are persuasive in terms of the power of others upon our being and their reluctance to democratise that power.

<sup>52</sup> This is endorsed by Hollis who states, “economic rationality can destroy trust, and hence, among other ties, the trust which markets need,” (1998: 159).



them) principles of social practice and conduct. The rationale for so doing is compelling for, as Thomas points out, should we not act on this basis we would have to, “habitually question each others’ integrity and sincerity, [and] co-operation would dissolve into a dust of suspicion and mistrust,” (1978:89).

There are assumed limitations on the scope of the stranger’s involvement with my property, usually no more than to observe and call foul if others resolve to steal it. In this we do not rely on the stranger trustee as we might on a colleague or a friend because we know nothing substantive or verifiable about her trustworthiness, nor do we have any sanction against her should she prove unreliable in her ascribed role. The case watcher has no reason to commit to the case owner other than to accept the task as a general principle of conduct. Nor is the commitment open ended; there is a limited time horizon to the tacit agreement which, whether it is made explicitly or is implicit, is reflected in the pace of life of the particular culture.<sup>53</sup> The requirements of the case watcher are that she will indeed do that. The watcher gains to the value of visible ratification of the contract and/or the feeling of well-being created through this benevolent act. The trustee may, of course, say no to the request, or limit her obligation by telling us that she could only manage five minutes before her own train. This response, defining the time of the trusting role may confirm an awareness of the scope of the task and the constraint which the watcher wishes to place on the assumptions of the case owner i.e. an implicit negotiation of parameters. However, usually we rely, as a minimum, on the assumption that the case watcher knows how – and intends – to follow the ‘rules’.

As I have described it, the stranger’s guardianship of the case stands unconnected to the actuality of the participant’s authenticity and functions as an inauthentic, social construct to reduce the level of risk and uncertainty in social engagements. Often these performance skills hide their self-interested intentionality which is only revealed when the question of personal benefit is compromised by acts of generosity to others. Competence of trust may be informed by enlightened self-interest but it is motivated by self-concerning reciprocity so that the consequence of the trust accrues, immediately or deferred, fully or partially, to the initiator of the act either as trustor or trustee. It is nothing more than the mere unfounded invitation to transact with me advertised as ‘trust me’.

<sup>53</sup> For a discussion of cultural difference in temporal perspective see McGrath (1988) *The Social Psychology of Time*.

#### **4. PERSONAL AND IMPERSONAL ENGAGEMENTS**

Now the situation may not be as straightforward as that. What happens if the case is taken by another? Does the request to look after the case contain the underlying assumption that the case watcher will go beyond the observer role and intervene if another acts suspiciously towards the case? In making the judgement that our watcher will act beyond the competence expected of her, surely we assume something more than competence: we are expecting the trustee to stand in our place; to empathise with our specific situation<sup>54</sup> as an identifiable person. Such an explanation is, of course, rooted in an appeal beyond reciprocity to something that binds even strangers together, perhaps the commonality of our humanity.<sup>55</sup>

Macmurray (1995) contributes a worthwhile insight here in his classification of engagements as personal or impersonal. The adoption of an impersonal or objective attitude towards an individual leaves the transaction lacking in humanity, it is functional and based on the value of the object of the transactions, not on the subject of the transaction. The transaction could be with anyone or anything, this is the essence of competence of trust.

Pettit (1995) reveals that many of our uses of the notion of trust when referring to acts whose expected outcomes are forms of social and professional competence are reliant on a different, more personal notion of trust. This is one that is based on the belief that something stands behind the actual competent action – its moral intentionality – which is more than the calculative and mechanical self-interest of the competent performer. This moral intentionality is not necessarily absent from competent performance – indeed in many cases it will be the motivation for that competent performance but it need not be there for the performance of the mere function of the competence of trust. Pettit's trust requires that there is a personal recognition of the other and an intention specifically to relate to that person. It is a unique not a general act. It may help to borrow an example from Fielding (1999). The difference is analogous to that in education, where teaching can be seen as a technical undertaking or as a personal encounter. I am not trying to imply that efficacy in the competence of trust has no moral authority; only that it need not have. Should any erosion occur

<sup>54</sup> Of course we could offer an inducement or some sanction but this changes the nature of the relationship and it is no longer trust in the sense I have developed. Thomas states, "he who trusts deprives himself of the use of a sanction and this risks losing what a sanction would secure," (1978:93).

<sup>55</sup> See Titmuss' (1970) discussion on the natural willingness of man to act altruistically to a stranger.

in the deeper dispositional meaning of trust, that which gives it authority and what settles for competence will be indifferent to the object of the competence. It will stand alone simply as it is and will be judged solely upon the instrumental effect it has, using the object of its focus as a means to exhibit that competence.

## 5. THE DECEIT OF TRUST

Pettit considers that deliberately constructing and exhibiting behaviours in ways that, by social convention, would be expected to be founded on a disposition of trustworthiness but which are, in fact, designed to manipulate others, are acts of deceitfulness. An example of this might be offering directions to a stranger for a certain destination in the full knowledge that these directions were incorrect. This view is similar to that of Hollis who states that, “trusting people to act in their self-interest is one thing and trusting them to live up to their obligations another. The former does not capture the bond of society, since the bond relies on trusting people not to exploit trust,” (1998:13). To allow others to assume a moral intention when none exists is to act in bad faith and is a sham of trust which can lead to unjustified manipulation.<sup>56</sup> Equally misleading, but perhaps less morally problematic, is where a deeper notion of trust may be present but personal efficacy through competence may be missing; here there is no wilful deceit, just ignorance. The two are not mutually exclusive and the relevance of their coalescence is central to a trusting relationship. This distinction draws from Kant’s own distinction between categorical and hypothetical imperatives. Skills in the competence of trust would be considered to represent, “practical necessity for a possible action as a means for attaining something else that one wants (or may possibly want),” (1993:25). This does not mean that these actions could not bring about good for others but that they are achieved merely as a means to something else. Competence of trust becomes expedient and in Kant’s terms carries no moral authority.

## 6. EXISTENTIAL TRUST

An alternative but complementary view of a trusting relationship other than that based on the competence of trust is one where we trust because our

<sup>56</sup> Scanlon (1998, Chapter 7) from a contractual perspective develops an argument based on matching reasonable expectation and reciprocity.

knowledge and actions of being-in-the-world are insufficient for us to deal with the difficulty<sup>57</sup> the world presents to us in resolving our being. In this sense trust offers, in the face of our own negation, existential security. To trust others we need to be open to them and trust in ourselves to grasp, in the course of creative activity, possibilities yet to be realised by ourselves and others. In this very real sense, being with others in 'existential trust' is the collaboration which enables personal freedom to be grasped. Existential trust is the antithesis of dependency and exploitation. Existential trust can be revealed through hermeneutic interpretation derived from a solidarity with humanity in the sense of Heidegger's *Mitsein*. Trusting is the result of co-disclosure of equally and mutually respected individuals and gains its moral authority from what Olafson calls "moral partnerships" (1998:53). This use of trust is more distinct and implies an emotional engagement that is usually perceived and acknowledged by the recipients as actions intentionally beneficial to their well-being. Trust in this sense is an expectation, not necessarily a product of rational expectation, that the interest of others will be put before one's own interest or concern. It is the perception that the trustee also has the capability to fulfil the entrusted act. It is as Bhaskar<sup>58</sup> says, "the primary existential," (1993:406).

Our choice to trust the case watcher, for instance, has much to do with our perception and then interpretation of what qualifies as trustworthiness in general and what is expected in a particular setting: will the person follow the rules? Would we ask her to watch our wallet as distinct from the visible case? Would we, ourselves, accept such a request? Should we wrongly interpret the trusting signs offered by the stranger we may add to our plight and increase, rather than reduce, the complexity and anxiety of the situation.<sup>59</sup>

The combination of competence and underlying trustworthiness, the preparedness to go beyond self-concern in alerting others to the theft and actively seeking the case's return, assumes a responsibility that could make the act moral in the sense of universality used by Kant. (I don't mean

<sup>57</sup> As Sartre comments, "This world is difficult. The notion of difficulty here is not a reflexive notion which would imply a relation to oneself. It is out there, in the world, it is a quality of the world given to perception ... it is the noetic correlate of the activity we have undertaken," (1996:62-63).

<sup>58</sup> Trust in Bhaskar's sense may be considered as a level three dialectical. It is located prior to the final stage typified by a retotalising *praxis*. It is a presupposing dialectic without which the retotalising of the social institutions such as education reverts to no more than a Sartrean *exis* (see note 39).

<sup>59</sup> In a probing book, Brown (1998) confronts the issue of willfulness in deceit as a dissemblance in the way we present ourselves of what we might authentically be.

chasing the thief necessarily but ensuring the authorities are notified or gathering information to pass on to the owner of the case which might assist in its return.) The act of case watching itself is not sufficient for it to be assumed as moral, for it may be satisfactorily completed by just choosing to follow the social conventions. If we do acknowledge that the case watcher is morally trustworthy we may assume she can empathise with us. The ability to empathise constitutes a kind of practical knowledge of the trusted partner, and includes self-knowledge in the sense that it is important to trust oneself; to know that self-deception is not at work.

Authenticity of existential trust is revealed both for-oneself and in-oneself through the moment of realisation of being as one, autonomously, with humanity in being-part of the world. The revelation, infrequently achieved, requires of us to openly seek the mutuality of our relationship with others but without losing what is our-self in the process. Clearly such openness requires trust of the type I have called 'existential'. One's possibilities can be realised through existential trust; trust experienced not as calculative performance but as Buber described this experience, "clad in the silver mail of trust," (1954:98). A notion of Buber's existential trust requires a dialogue that seeks to reveal the sentiments and feelings of others based on a disposition of respect. But it requires much more than that: it requires altruism and benevolence.

Both sentiments are genuinely part of a notion of humanity. Altruism is, according to Nagel (1970:143), the "universal recognition of the reality of other persons," and "merely the willingness to act in consideration of the interests of others without the need for ulterior motives," (1970:79). It is the connection with someone else's interests as if they could be yours. For Nagel, altruism offers an additional rational argument for our actions and is considered a distinct and irreducible constituent of the human condition which does not stand in the place of self-interest but alongside it. Hutcheson illustrates this point well when he states that benevolence (acting under the influence of altruism) is not discovered by seeking it through actions solely driven by self-interest; it cannot be considered, in any form, a consequence of self interest. For him benevolence and self-interest are both modes of revealing self primordially, but not derived from the notion of the superiority of self-interest. Hutcheson proposes that we can "never call that man benevolent who is in fact useful to others, but at the same time only intends his own interest, without any ultimate desire of the good of others," (quoted in Rogers, 1997:131).

To act benevolently and to feel sympathy for others we have to perceive the essential nature of the need and emotion of another. The concern is to seek an understanding, an interpretation, of the experience of the others which informs us sufficiently of the emotions of another so that we might

experience an emotional reaction ourselves as a response to the other's plight. First to perceive and then to comport towards the sentiments of another needs a form of perception which is empathetic.<sup>60</sup> Both Vetlesen (1994) and Stein (1989) have recognised that what we perceive of the sentiments of others is determined by our internal projection of the sentiment of others as our 'own'. In this sense, "empathy is a necessary prerequisite for the development of an awareness and understanding of the emotions and feelings of another," (Vetlesen, 1994:204). The interpretation of the empathic perception is based on the moral disposition of the empathiser. It is not, however, the actual experience of the sentiment of another. Empathy is for Stein the perception of another's experience non-primordially. This clearly differs from the primordial experience of the event as these are the privileged perceptions and reactions of the person who experienced the occurrence in the first place. For Stein, empathy is the ability to perceive the experience of another from the other's position. It is not the experience of the other's experience yet this assumes a temporality which is at odds with our real, unconcealed experience.

An example might help. Rambert in Camus' 'The Plague' is obsessed with leaving the plague ridden city of Oran until a conversation with Tarrou and Dr. Rieux. He had been justifying his argument to leave the city because of love for his wife regardless of the positions of his friends and in particular Dr. Rieux who has shown consistent professionalism towards fighting the plague:

"Rieux drained his glass.

'Come along' he said to Tarrou. 'We've work to do'.

He went out.

Tarrou followed, but seemed to change his mind when he reached the door. He stopped and looked at the journalist.

'I suppose you don't know that Rieux's wife is in a sanatorium a hundred miles or so away'.

Rambert showed surprise, and began to say something; but Tarrou had already left the room.

At a very early hour next morning Rambert rang up the doctor.

<sup>60</sup> Hatab (2002) writes that empathy is a moral mood which makes compassion possible but is more than simply compassion. and suggests that we might conclude that, "empathy is an existential precondition for a moral life" (2002:253). He latter develops his notion of empathy through Heidegger's notion of *ecstatic* claiming that it can be "understood as a primal mode dwelling or attunement with the social world, as a capacity for ecstatic being in/there/with others with respect to existential weal and woe," (2002:260).

‘Would you agree to my working with you until I find some way of getting out of town?’

There was a moment’s silence before the reply came.

‘Certainly, Rambert. Thanks’”

(Camus, 1960:158-9).

Empathy is a perceptual process and the interpretation of the empathetic perceiver’s perception is what bears moral interrogation. One empathises and then chooses to act. Clearly, an inability to empathise with another will inhibit the development of that compassion and, where appropriate, the desire to reduce the distress of the human condition. The same applies to existential trust for it is not merely counting on others to reciprocate but also to understand. Our trustworthy actions need not be explicit (not passive activity as in the Sartrean notion of ‘*exis*’),<sup>61</sup> but may involve refraining from acting to benefit another: for instance when keeping a promise of silence. Morally, as Schopenhauer (1995) has shown, the perceptions of another’s distress, if interpreted in a sympathetic way, establishes a responsibility of compassion on us which is accompanied by an obligation to seek a reduction in their woe. Compassion is identified with the distress or joy of the other and if coupled with a benevolent disposition, will lead to actions to reduce the distress, or celebrate the joy, of another.

I have offered a view that we read competence of trust as a generalised expectation upon which we can rely to function in a social life, whereas existential trust is specifically related to me as a separately identified member of humanity. Is there then a clear difference between two acts whose immediate outcomes are the same? Is there, for instance, a difference between an act by a person intent on his own gain or one whose intent is based on a desire for another’s benefit and well-being? Further, is there a difference in the relationship where the intention of one party is a series of discrete, competent acts undertaken out of self interest and those of an actor whose interest is the longer term benefit of others? On reflection, with whom are personal risks, relating to future selves, most likely to be taken, given that each has equally good and verifiable skills? Which one would warrant the label trustworthy and which is reliable?

<sup>61</sup> Sartre defines ‘*exis*’ as “an inert, stable condition opposed to *praxis*,” (1976:828).

## 7. TRUSTING IN WHAT – IT DEPENDS!

Given that a difference can be ascertained, which is more likely to be trusted with desired events or revelations of self which are incompatible and inconsistent with the socially presented and reinforced self? Clearly answers to these questions and others will depend on the context and on the nature of the trusting relationship. If I were to require surgery I would prefer to trust in the competence of an internationally famous surgeon, even one with a reputation for obnoxious or self-centred behaviour, than in my dearest friend's surgical skills (who has no competencies in medicine at all) but cares deeply for me. I existentially trust in her however, to support me after the operation and not to abuse this trust when I am most vulnerable. Both forms of trust are not mutually exclusive but competence does not presuppose compassion.

Existential trust, in the sense developed here, is necessarily more than just an application of expectancy utility theory. It transcends this in that it requires the trustors to offer up their vulnerability, to reveal themselves in their authenticity stripped of the protection of their social roles. It is involving, not observational. It carries a moral obligation. Baier takes this position when she considers that in moral trusting, "one leaves others the opportunity to harm one ... and also shows one's confidence that they will not take it. Reasonable trust will require good grounds for such confidence in another's goodwill," (1986:235). If this trust is proven to be misplaced or misunderstood, then even contemplating a small risk to an expected outcome, specifically in relation to a highly cherished aim, may prove intolerable. In such a vulnerable state those who accept the trust offered are in a privileged and powerful position. They are trusted not to use this authority to manipulate and exploit the trustee.

Trusting of this type can be shown to satisfy Baier's moral test<sup>62</sup> and assumes benevolent motives as a necessary condition for parties to trust each other. In this it has a resonance with the popular meaning of caring<sup>63</sup> for others. It is a more specific case of the sentiment evoked by the rationality of Kant's treatment of people as ends in themselves,<sup>64</sup> by Hume's regard

<sup>62</sup> "I tentatively propose a test for the moral decency of a trust relationship, namely, that its continuation need not rely on successful threats held over the trusted or on her successful cover-up of breaches of trust," (1995:123).

<sup>63</sup> I am particularly referring to the argument made by Gilligan (1982).

<sup>64</sup> "The practical imperative will therefore be the following: Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of another, always at the same time as an end and never simply as a means," (Kant, 1993:36). See also Kant's *On Education* (1992) and Habermas' *Discourse Ethics* (1990).



both for others in themselves and comparatively,<sup>65</sup> and by the notion of respect for humanity proposed by Williams (1973). But trust needs more than respect for others: it requires one to be sympathetic to the other's woe.

Sympathy for another's plight is at the core of the Humean concept of humanity as indeed it is for Kant. Schopenhauer goes further and uses it to develop his definition of ethical behaviour where sympathy and compassion are at its core. To quote him, "I suffer directly with him, I feel his woe just as I ordinarily feel only my own; and likewise, I directly desire his weal in the same way I otherwise desire only my own. But this requires that I am in some way identified with him ... Only insofar as an action has sprung from compassion does it have moral value," (1995:143-4). There seems then a coalescence of sentiments which may form a disposition which can be accepted as trustworthiness. These are respect, sympathy and compassion for others. All three lead us to act benevolently towards others and indicate the capacity to put aside personal interests when accepting the moral obligations of trust. Existential trust requires more than merely having confidence in what others are required to do. It is based on the belief that the relationship will not be exploited. It is betrayal of this trust which leads to the irreversible conclusion, "I'll never trust you again".

## 8. AN EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

By focusing on personal relationships I have only fleetingly given them a wider social context and hardly mentioned the university. I will rest here to do so. I assume universities are particular social institutions in which society has placed trust to resolve external risk and complexity at the limits of its confidence in its future. In this, universities hold a heavy responsibility for what humanity might become, and in response to this they have a special obligation not to abuse the responsibilities and privileges they are offered. If they allow this confidence held in them by their stakeholders to be destroyed without offering alternative symbolic reassurance that the whole structure can achieve an alternative equilibrium, it could lead to lack of confidence in the future and a generalised lack of personal trust. On this Bok's (1989:33) analysis of the relationship between personal and

<sup>65</sup> "We may either regard them as they really are in themselves; or may make a comparison betwixt them and our own qualities and circumstance; or may join these two methods of consideration. The good qualities of others, from the first point of view, produce love; from the second, humility; and from the third, respect; which is a mixture of these two passions," (1990:389-90).

institutional trust is illuminating. She uses trust in the non-verifiable way and states, “Trust in some degree of veracity functions as a foundation of relationships among human beings: when this trust shatters or wears away, institutions collapse”.<sup>66</sup> Should universities choose to position themselves as both the architects of the future and facilitators of authenticity then it is important that they provide trusting climates in which students can reflect on their own authenticity and expose their vulnerabilities, protected from the threat of exploitation or intellectual and physical bullying.

It is our confidence in the institutions and trust in our personal relationships with the individuals which make them up which creates our social reality, within which we engage with others. It is confidence in the eventual predictability of outcomes based on an understanding that we are treated with respect and as part of, yet differentiated from, others. For us to retain our confidence in such institutions, we must allow trust to prevail secured by, “mutual respect and generalised reciprocity<sup>67</sup> among reasonable persons,” (Hollis, 1998:159), who are personally responsible for the actions of the institutions. In the educational context I am thinking of staff addresses from senior management whose reputations have been undermined because of their actions which may have been unfair to academics, students, or both. I am also thinking of institutions whose function is to clear the opacity of the future but live in the past and present of others, and I am thinking of those who make it difficult for those who seek truth through involvement in education to succeed in a culture of performativity. The premise offered here and developed further in Chapter 7 is that authentically being-in-the-world with others is assisted by trustworthy institutions that reveal, through their practices, a temporalised disclosure for the growth of the individual rather than a self-interested and inauthentic background of bad faith inherent in being-for-others-through their-use.

To reveal our freely chosen possibilities requires us to face up to our own existence for what it is and what we intend it to be; in this it is future orientated. This facing up can be assisted by the institutions of higher

<sup>66</sup>In a footnote to this sentence Bok explains the use of the word ‘veracity’ which has resonance with my previous analysis. She writes, “the function of the principle of veracity as a foundation is evident when we think of trust. I can have different kinds of trust: that you will treat me fairly, that you will have my interests at heart, that you will do me no harm. But if I do not trust your word can I have a genuine trust in the first three? If there is no confidence in the truthfulness of others, is there any way to assess their fairness, their intentions to help or harm? How, then, can they be trusted? *Whatever* matters to human beings, trust is the atmosphere in which it thrives,” (1989:31).

<sup>67</sup>General reciprocity is used by Hollis as a form of binding of membership to a group whose membership is unknown but whose features are recognised through the nature of the being of the networked member.

education: they are important institutions for the future of humanity. This security is the solidarity at the core of Jaspers' (1960) community of scholars who feel free to test to the extreme their ideas in a supportive and trusting dialogue with others. This mode of discourse demands commitment, and this requires those engaging in it to be courageous enough to face a future discontinuous from, and outside of, their particular social cocoons. It probably requires a dialogue based on a *praxis* of mutual trust which has no place for the abuse of a person's vulnerability. It is a dialogue which does not require disrespectful agreement with poorly reasoned or untested positions. It is a community where trust can form the basis of friendship of the sort which has resonance with Fielding's (1998) recent discussion of community.

The arguments made in this chapter would give education a central place in the ongoing reconstitution of our autonomous identity, in the sense of functioning independently as knowing agents within a social context (See Diagram 4.1). It requires of those upon whom trust is bestowed for one's education to accept, and to be worthy of accepting, the moral obligation for the well-being of others that accompanies it.<sup>68</sup> In doing this higher education institutions should encourage self-trust developed through dialogue as reasoned argument and debate. To give such trust takes time and support, for it is not the everyday experience of our world. To secure morally beneficial outcomes requires an empathetic, trusting relationship between tutor and student to encourage trustworthiness in a climate free from the fear of exploitation through economic pressures. At the present time this is growing ever more difficult, as those services which can help to underpin a facilitating, trusting environment (personal guidance, lecturer/student contact and pastoral care) are some of the very features most at risk in the efficiency gains of modern mass higher education.

<sup>68</sup> Of course uneducated people in any formal sense can be, "compassionate and courageous as educated can lack perseverance and integrity," (Peters, 1973:239) but I am not implying any dualism here.

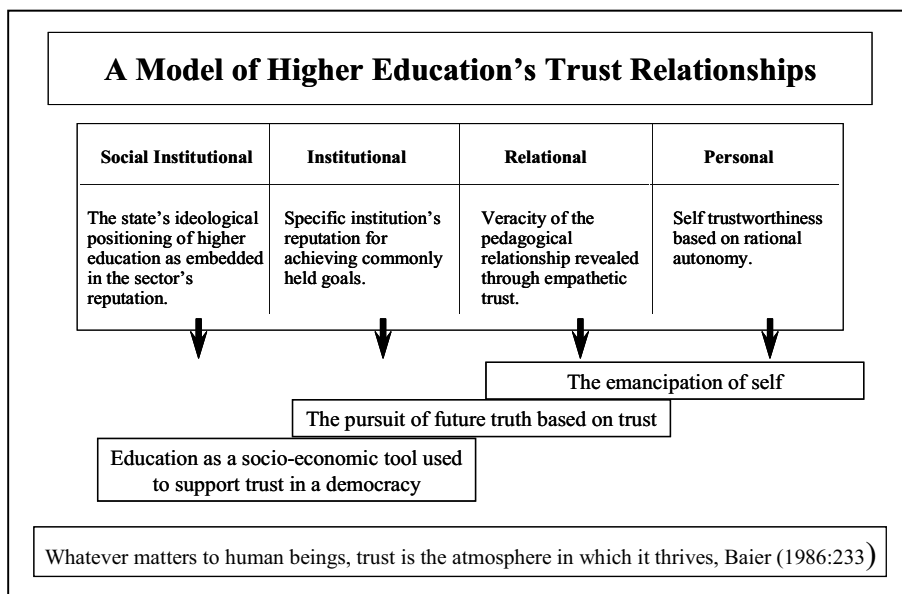


Figure 1. A Model of Universities' Trust Relationships

Should a university cease to provide such opportunities for its students and staff, it risks becoming an institution where there is fear and lack of confidence in its own durability and worth as a social or political institution. It will lack respect from the academic community and by its actions will lower self respect and esteem<sup>69</sup> in its own community. This may lead to instrumentality which would change education from a potential mode of revealing oneself through trust, based on unspecified personal obligation, to one where the economic exchange holds sway. With the contractual model at its core, education is redefined not as the fusion of subject and object but in forms of instrumental competence that may deprive education of a moral texture. Consider, in this context, the engineering of an explicit student debt and the potential of associated guilt which may accompany it, particularly for those culturally alien to usury, and the emphasis on pay back through employability rather than scholarship.

In such an environment members of the institution may fall back on the short closure of a future through cynicism, where rejection becomes the defence mechanism to retain their identity. This leads to a reduction in the perceived risk levels by lowering the temporal horizons of significance of an

<sup>69</sup> For a further discussion of this point see P. White (1987).

acceptable future. Vulnerabilities are hidden and personal development hampered. Confidence in the function and purpose of the institution becomes disconnected from the imperatives which ought to underpin it, and its reputation decays. Students become maximum aggregated student numbers. The reduction in their trust of those teaching, in their projects and in the shortening of their futures brings the social cocoon closer to the 'now' of the activities of the student. Their choices are more restricted and they are more likely to retreat into the past from which the future is determined for them by others. This entrenchment emphasises the need for the security of the familiar and the predictable but it closes off creative possibilities. It reduces the complexity of the unknown into the domain of the present and knowable and so reduces the anxiety involved in facing up to their inauthenticity. It leaves them susceptible to those who offer their future, as theirs, to them. It hampers authenticity and is an environment where the instrumentalism of the competence of trust thrives. Educational practice which does this might be considered as dissembling, a deceit to perpetuate inauthenticity and individualism. Brown captures this well when she writes, "[D]issembling stands in a similar position with respect to wilful disregard as mere dishonesty does to ignorance. When we dissemble we lack integrity; when we wilfully disregard a body of knowledge, we refuse our duty to know," (1998:50).

However, if we can develop a goal for higher education which links authentic well-being with practical wisdom then, perhaps, central to its success will be the scholars as teachers. They will have to be worthy of society's moral and political trust; they ought to seek to be *phronimos*. In this light, whether one is *phronimos* or not depends on the action of thinking, and its thoughtful attentiveness to that which calls for thinking. In Heidegger, *praxis* itself is an ongoing transformation of *praxis* in each case; it is an ongoing transformation of human existence (the *prakton*) in its response to belong to Being as such (McNeill, 1999:44ff.). This conclusion is compatible with Buber's notion of education and indeed the other existentialists discussed in this paper. Such teachers are worthy of intellectual freedom, desire the resources to work with the talent of the nation and should not be judged by mechanical measures of success. However, they must accept the self-evident truth that in seeking to facilitate practical wisdom<sup>70</sup> they themselves must show it. This is a heavy burden for

<sup>70</sup> I contend that Aristotle's use of *phronesis* is compatible with a notion of self as humanity, not as an isolated agent in society. For instance the reference in Book Six, Chapter Five to the nature of Pericles' wisdom being for himself and humanity and in Chapter Seven the reference to man being part of the world, not the highest personal form in it (Aristotle, 1971). This view is supportive of Nussbaum (1993).

the academic community to bear, but one it ought to accept if higher education is to retain any sense of distinctiveness from other forms of education and training.<sup>71</sup>

In the rest of the book I consider how the experience of higher education can accommodate authenticity and facilitate existential trust. Reasons why we should take such trouble have been developed in this and the previous chapter and include the following:

- The acknowledgement that our well-being is connected to that of the rest of humanity;
- The realisation of one's authenticity as part of humanity;
- The acceptance of personal responsibility for the *praxis* of one's existence through trustworthiness.

<sup>71</sup> In a wider context see Collier (1995) for a discussion of virtuous organisations.

## Chapter 5

# EDUCATION IN A CULTURE OF SUSPICION?

*“At first blush, the lessons of Enron seem obvious. For customers and employees, let the buyer beware. For investors, more cynicism and scrutiny is warranted. For accountants, more oversight and reform is needed. In other words – there is greed at the heart of business, and it must be guarded against by institutions, laws and a vigilant populace,”* Green G.H, (2002).

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Trust in the sense I have developed is a kind of freedom from suspicion and from distrust. The freedom to realise possibilities. This we have established mainly in the sense of the individual. For a commercial organisation, the consequences are the same as Solomon and Flores (2001:5) describe it (with a hint of Hobbesism) “without trust the corporation becomes not community but brutish state of nature, a war of all against all in which employment tends to be nasty, brutish and short”. Breaches of corporate trust are more than mere disappointment caused by poor judgement or by mistakes. These are blameworthy but are not of the form that attribute a notion of betrayal. Acts of insincerity, reneging on promises and lying, if deliberate, are such cases. In the business environment such acts inhibit the market, affect morale and adversely impact on stakeholder confidence. This betrayal of trust is hard if not impossible to rebuild and goes far beyond the culpable party, affecting the very essence of faith in the markets. This is why they take USA Presidential statements and knee-jerk legislation to ensure that confidence is restored not through trust but through the fear of the consequences of breaking the rules. This behaviour ignores the cause of the mistrust and deals with a symptom. It is an encouragement to those whose morality is determined instrumentally by the rules of authorities and whose

actions are determined to gain advantage by stretching the word not the spirit.

## 2. A CULTURE OF SUSPICION

Notions of control and power in institutional trust are developed by Hardy et al. (2000). In the UK, attempts to improve the quality and transparency of society's commercial and governmental institutions have been produced by Cadbury and Nolan. At their core is a demand for the trustworthiness of those holding positions of power but, as O'Neil (2002) points out, these attempts have been undertaken at a time of a *Zeitgeist* of deceit and suspicion. As she states, "We may not have evidence for a crisis in trust; but have massive evidence of a culture of suspicion," (2002:18). She offers her own reason for its emergence, citing our relentless pursuit of a culture of accountability as damaging trust rather than helping it flourish. She elegantly put it, "plants don't flourish when we pull them up too often to check how their roots are growing: political, institutional and professional life too may not flourish if we constantly uproot it to demonstrate that everything is transparent and trustworthy," (2002:29). O'Neil's thrust is clear. If you want to trust, have professionals whom you designate as trustworthy and trust them!

O'Neil develops her argument that our society's crisis in trust is one of suspicion by offering a solution based on genuine rights, accountabilities and efforts to reduce deceptive communication. To test if these fears are genuine we need to be informed in order to give consent to trust and this needs clear information provided by a responsible and uncensored media to help us to judge where to place our trust. Her argument then is that we need to test for deception rather than transparency for the former can lead to treachery and betrayal.

So how can we dismantle the culture of suspicion? Accountability as an instrumental metric form will fail as the stock market scandal of the USA (and elsewhere) discussed above has shown. Refining trustworthiness to procedures and verification to checking outputs can damage trustworthiness, absolving professionals of their professional accountabilities and replacing them with standards of performance rather than personal responsibility and obligation. O'Neill talks not of the lack of desire for, or the necessity of, accountability but of its current form.

For her, 'intelligent accountability' (2002:58) places verifiable professional integrity at the core of our trusting relationships with institutions. Intelligent accountability relies more on good governance than notions of total control. Reporting that 'tells it how it is' which is judged by



those who know and whose knowledge and lack of self-interest are apparent can give the public confidence. This is supported by Sako (2000) who found that companies prepared to engage in 'goodwill trust' (where mutual benefit is the goal and effort is put into trust enhancement rather than prevention of trust abuses) perform better than those who focus on frameworks against abuses of trust. Yet the University of Maryland announced in 2002 that all undergraduates on all assignments, tests and examinations must declare that they have not received or given any unauthorised assistance in production of the work. It is unclear why this should only be applicable to students and not academics – are they too busy on academic production to check their work and fulfil the pledge that university education ought to have made to them? Surely the university is not intending to say that every student is potentially a cheat (just as every man is potentially a rapist) but we do not normally expect people to make explicit that they haven't cheated unless we believe they may actually have done so (which is somehow more than potential). More accountability or a sure sign of a culture of suspicion?

### **3. IN WHAT CAN WE HAVE TRUST?**

The solution to the corporatisation of universities and the suspicion that goes with it is the international adoption of forms of governance. Whether it be South Africa, Canada, Europe, or Australia, driven internally or by the World Bank, forms of governance are becoming requirement for Universities. Further, these require explicit statement of accountabilities for which the governors can be held accountable. In the UK the state funding agency for Higher Education requires that, as a minimum, these disclosures should include an account of how the following broad principles of corporate governance have been applied:

- “the identification and management of risk should be linked to the achievement of institutional objectives
  - “the approach to internal control should be risk-based, including an evaluation of the likelihood and impact of risks becoming a reality
  - “review procedures must cover business, operational and compliance as well as financial risk
  - “risk assessment and internal control should be embedded in ongoing operations
  - “the governing body or relevant committee should receive regular reports during the year on internal control and risk
  - “the principal results of risk identification, evaluation and management review should be reported to, and reviewed by, the governing body,”
- HEFCE Circular Letter number 23/2002.

This is clearly an attempt to build competency of trust in higher education as if it needs it following its restructuring to follow the market model. Research on this general area of governance is well reported in the literature (see for instance, Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies, University of Twente, The Netherlands) and I make no more attempt to comment on it here, only to indicate that the forms of external governance that many nations are adopting are those whose creation were based on the failures of the market to maintain order within its participants. This implication shapes and enframes higher education within the business model and makes it difficult for the organisation to be other than it has been destined to be by the market.

However I will linger to question whether we develop our notion of governance for higher education based on the success of the corporate ideal? How well has governance worked in the commercial market place? Surely the transfer of principles encased in an ideology ought to be seen to be working before they are adopted wholesale elsewhere? So how well has business done in recent times?

The decline of the respect, confidence and trust in the capitalist system, particularly in the USA, although in more prudent nations as well, has been dramatic in its recent publicity. The scandals of the first decade of 2000<sup>72</sup> have seen the egotism practised under the catch phrase ‘shareholder value’ dented and the non-interventionist American rush to legal imperatives to secure the very structure of their economic system. Enron, WorldCom and others have created fear of similar fraudulent activity to all of the world’s major markets, encouraging instrumental means of protection for the shareholder democracies of the world.

In America, companies such as Enron and WorldCom, Global Crossing and Xerox deceived their shareholders by falsifying their accounts. Alan Greenspan, chairman of America’s Federal Reserve, spoke of the ‘infectious greed’ that had gripped much of American business, a greed that ultimately pushed some of these companies into bankruptcy. With over 1,000 American companies restating their earning since 1997 – admitting, in effect, that they had previously published wrong or misleading numbers – investors are losing trust in American management, companies and even their managerial ideology. Many have suffered at the hands of the powerful few. Pensions have been eroded or restructured and many have lost their

<sup>72</sup> Clearly I am not assuming that scandals are new but that the global impact, the power wielded by global institution executives and the compliance of governments has created an unprecedented situation.

jobs. Hardly, I would suggest, a good model on which to build an education system!

Reasons not to trust the business model are not restricted to the USA. Consider, for example, Vivendi Universal, a French-based media, telecoms and water group that has flirted with bankruptcy in recent weeks or ABB, a once admired but now troubled Swiss-Swedish engineering group, which uncovered a fraud affecting its 1999 and 2000 figures. France Telecom and Deutsche Telekom companies have presided over highly-priced misadventures and the same is true of Italy's Fiat. In Japan, the problem also includes accounting but extends to food fraud. Universal Studios has served beef, caviar and salami that was as much as nine months past its sell-by date, supplied with falsified labels. And it emerged that Kyowa Perfumery, an additives maker, had for 30 years been shipping banned flavourings to unsuspecting companies such as Kentucky Fried Chicken and Meiji Seika, one of Japan's biggest confectionery manufacturers; their products have had to be hastily recalled. Greed is not the only infection that can grip a corporation but it is easy to understand that in a system which encourages wealth creation this should dominate.

It is an illustration of a hard fact of the new, privatised, deregulated world in which many of us live: markets aren't simple devices, easily left to themselves to deliver the best result for the people. They are complicated, and creating ones that work is a difficult task. In the 1990s, with the vogue for deregulation around the world, very clever people devised markets where they hadn't existed before, in electricity, certainly, but also in health care, education and rail travel.

These ingenious creations have had variable results. Their proponents would claim that, whatever the glitches, created markets have delivered competition, lower prices and producers that respond better to consumer demands.

But when markets go wrong, they go spectacularly wrong. How to get the benefits of competition in industries where competition doesn't come easily remains a conundrum for economists. The invisible hand of the market often needs a pretty strong hand of government hovering over it to stop it going terribly wrong.

Action can be taken and, as the report below from the Washington Post illustrates, it is about resolving trust in organisations through control not through personal veracity. The market and its notion of trust remains one of the competence of trust where expensive external controls curb the excesses of those whose goals are greed (and indeed the very assumption upon which the market itself is built)

“WorldCom Inc. will set aside 25 per cent of its profit for dividends, place strict limits on executive compensation and offer no short-term earnings projections as a result of a new set of corporate governance restrictions drafted by its court-appointed monitor.

“Breen outlined the restrictions in a 149-page draft titled ‘Restoring Trust’. The directives are aimed at ensuring that the company never repeats the mistakes that resulted in the largest corporate fraud in history. WorldCom filed for bankruptcy protection last year and hopes to emerge from it this fall.

“‘The company has already implemented many of the proposed corporate reforms, but we know we have to do even more to regain public trust,’ said chief executive Michael D. Capellas.” Stern, *Washington Post*, August 26, 2003.

Is this what we want our universities to be like or to perpetuate?

#### **4. TRUST EDUCATIONALISTS TO BE THAT; NOT ENTREPRENEURS**

I now want to attempt to show that trust, rather than confidence-building mechanisms, in social institutions such as education, allows agents to engage with and act through them but that such confidence has to be founded on some belief in the trustworthiness of those to whom students will reveal their vulnerability. From the existence of personal empathic trust, confidence as a measure of the reliability of the trust relationship grows. It is from this that the more enduring and generalised (but less distinct in nature) notion of goodwill comes. Take for instance the process of assessment. It carries a technical competence in that it is trusted to produce impartial, fair and accurate information. It is trusted to do this regardless of the circumstance in which it is employed; it is an end in itself but acts as a means by assessing the behaviours of the student. The empathetic trust, which has revealed the subject of assessment, stands in benevolent support of that student. Should this not be the case, mutual trust in the emancipating role of education is eroded, to be replaced by habitualised and homogenised skills.

That is not to say that competence-based approaches to assessment cannot accommodate a morality but that at some stage the final judgement must be trusted to reflect the true worth of the learning contract. Trust in self and the assessor give validity to the process of accrediting work. It is not a blind, unquestioning acceptance but forms the foundation on which

systems and procedures relevant to, and showing respect for, the stakeholders of the learning agreement can be built. Through formative and summative judgements, the learning communities surrounding the learning contract will need to trust each other.

This trusting relationship within which judgements are made does require recognised outcomes. To have articulated these, whether as performance criteria or other competence frameworks, adds to the explicitness of the judgement. It facilitates fairness. Professional assessment judgements, if they are to be that, have to be made from a sense of fiduciary obligation and responsibility; this makes the relationship a moral one. If all that is in question is the competence of the actions offered in response to a request, the relationship is one of technical competence.

If we can accept that the central stakeholders to the partnership of a learning contract ought to trust each other, what reason should others have in trusting the outcomes of such a partnership? Why should government entrust money, or students their personal vulnerabilities? Clearly these are of central concern if the credentials delivered through partnerships are not to be seen as leading to lowering of confidence and goodwill in the benefits to society which each of the institutions now separately teach. The argument for retention of confidence would require a homogeneity in the outputs of all qualifications which would be trusted for purpose where that purpose may no longer be the subjugation of self by the alienation of working for others.

Change is required or the shackling of the past will continue to constrain innovation in education through myth and ritual. To reach out into the community, to question whether any line need be drawn between higher and further education requires of the host community time and trust. It will be adopted faster if there is belief in the empathetic and atemporal trustworthiness of the vocation of education. It is through trustworthiness that the new future of lifetime learning can be built. Partnership built on professional trustworthiness within an awareness of the pace of the different temporal cultures has the potential of achieving it. The solution is not, however, to constrain the reaching out of institutions to match the needs of learners and commerce with products that satisfy their needs and in which they have current confidence but to find new means of satisfying individual needs in ways in which we can all trust.

What is required is a pluralistic perspective. One perspective which offers insights comes from the political philosopher Dunne (1994) who considers the notion of trust as “both a passion (an affective condition, linked to expectations of others future actions) and a policy (a method of dealing with the fact that most important human interests depend profoundly on the future free actions of other human beings). These are better seen over time as two ways of conceiving essentially the same reality, not a description

of two comprehensively distinguishable phenomena,” (1994:641). This definition links the themes of this book; empathetic trust, social complexity and the temporalising effect of confidence in reducing the risk of a future.

Trow, in an important article (1996:312), addresses the relationship that links higher education with its supporting societies and, although he acknowledges the important role of external accountability, he cautions about a hegemony of accountability which threatens the “freedom of professionals to manage their own time and define their own work. And external accountability, when it applies common standards and criteria to many institutions can work against diversity among them”. These concerns have also been voiced by Harvey and Knight (1996:117) who advocate (when talking about their improvement-led as against accountability-led approaches to quality assurance) that, “continuous improvement is driven bottom-up. This requires placing trust in the professionalism of academics”. Regardless of the model, trust in those who operate it is of central concern. But the conflation of the terms trust, faith, confidence and familiarity may indeed lead to the contempt of the particular issue of trust which is a distinct general predisposition for all social action.

## 5. ACCOUNTABILITY

In UK higher education, movement to a less invasive inspection is a move in this direction. Yet in an article by Jackson (1998) he repeatedly confuses trust with the transfer of accountability, which is different. Little he can propose is genuine trust. Often he means confidence or accountability evoking public opinion to support changes already made under an invasive system and then expecting changes to be voluntarily taken up. This does not sound like trust, more like exploitation. For instance, “Applying the principle of partnership in trust would place the onus on the institutions to demonstrate, to the Quality Assurance Agency (and other national and international regulatory authorities) that they had in place explicit, comprehensive, reliable and effective mechanisms for assuring the quality of their education and academic standards, and which protected the interests of the various constituents they served,” (1998:6).

There are many contentious issues within this proposal from a senior member of the UK regulating body. His lack of justification for the adoption of the business notion is at least debatable, but his confusion that trust is the same as control built on explicit evidence is surely wrong. The idea that you can regularise the outcome of an educational encounter hits at the heart of what education is and an educated person might be. The assertion that is at the core – and most problematic – is the assumption that education is the

repetition of an ascribed and defined past but, if education is a process where engagement leads to a new and unknowable future, it fails to provide for a sense of trust where collaboration and vulnerability can flourish.

Trusting in and with organisations has many benefits, distrust many disadvantages. In a significant collection of studies into trust Lane and Bachmann (2000) provide a complex tapestry of economic and moral issues. Sako, for instance, in the same publication shows that forms of trust can be seen as contributors to superior performance and business success. Tschannen-Moran (2001) considers that trust contributes to lowering transactional cost, improving the quality of communication, leads to more accurate and speedy communication of facts as well as feelings and ideas and a more motivated staff. She states that in, “organisations with a high level of trust, participants are more comfortable and are able to invest their energies in contributing to organisational goals rather than self-protection,” (2001:315).

Commercial operations at both macro and micro levels have woken up to the need for a form of trust to facilitate the general exchanges upon which their systems of capitalism work. Indeed at the nation state level, Fukuyama (1996) has stressed the role of communal solidarity in the engendering of economic growth. Much of this work has direct commercial application in the need to reduce anxiety in the buyer-supplier relationship<sup>73</sup> and focuses on the supply chain.

This approach to products and services has been clearly recognised in the post-Thatcher market for mass education. However, the ideology and ethic of self interest which philosophically underpins the Western implementation of the Eastern being-of-communal-solidarity as the main motivation, begs questions regarding its adequacy to satisfy the goal of an educational system. For here the object of the project is the emancipation of students which ought to outweigh the interests of maintaining the fabric of a social institution based on a work ethic which itself is evolving from a desire to manipulate.<sup>74</sup> To seek this change to benevolence from self-interest is not an exercise in blind faith but a desire to position the legal nature of educational partnership at the centre of a moral model of empathic trust. This, from the perspective of a civilised society, ought to be more sustainable and enduring than one whose *raison d'être* is solely to make manifest the managerial mantras of economies of scope and scale.

<sup>73</sup> See the seminal work of Gundlach and Murphy (1993).

<sup>74</sup> See White (1997b) for an alternative discussion on the centrality of work as the essence of education.

The market mechanism and its valorised notion of globalisation has become all invasive. It develops mechanisms whose temporality is 'timeless time' characterized by the perturbation of the sequential order of events, compressing them to achieve instantaneity, or introducing random discontinuity. Such disruption of temporality and its foreclosure of the futural horizons may be appropriate where money is the currency of time and the notion of stationary input prices but this loss of temporality, and realism, which is replaced by a detemporalised notion of time is inappropriate for higher education. The embeddedness of the sequencing of present, typical of the way the market values activities, is a further constraint. I would argue that the adoption of the market as the model for higher education without due consideration of disruption to the integrated notion of temporality and, hence, understanding oneself, is reason enough for not pursuing such a course. For when we do so we foreshorten our ability to face the future and, indeed, the possibilities that future might hold outside of the computation of investment returns.

The university ought to stand out against this foreshortening of temporal horizons so as to enable space for the realisation of future possibilities through openness to ideas prior to knowing their consequences. This is the risk of facing the unknown. It ought to take the risks which are not always calculable in terms of investment returns as the market reveals its future in terms of profit and surplus value. Universities shape the future in trust that the form of knowledge that prevails is not to be restricted. This mission is one where the commercialisation of ideas is not the only purpose that is encouraged, supported and advocated.



## Chapter 6

# IF NOT THE MARKET MODEL, THEN PERHAPS A HEIDEGGERIAN PERSPECTIVE?

*“What are the radical defects from which modern European culture suffers? For it is evident that in the long run the form of humanity dominant at the present day has its origin in these defects.*

*“The great question must remain outside these pages. Its treatment would require of us to unfold in detail the doctrine of human existence which, like a leitmotiv, is interwoven, insinuated, whispered in them. Perhaps, before long, it may be cried aloud,” Ortega y Gasset, (1993:190).*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter commences with an introduction and summary to Heidegger’s ideas and critique of higher education and then I seek to find a way in which these criticisms might be answered in a university in-the-world. Having disregarded the superficial answer that the university’s primary and distinctive role is in the making of its awards, I suggest that a more grounded function, worthy of social support, is the provision of learning opportunities for students not only to become competent in scholarship but through it to be better able to take responsibility for their own identities. Although this by itself does not provide an exclusive mission, if the process is responsibly and jointly engaged in by student and academic with the common goal of revealing, through research and scholarly activity, a future for humanity, it becomes worthy of the support of its host communities.

The second section introduces the notion of the context for an educational *praxis* for higher education and indicates how this may be used to ground vocationalism in the action of becoming-educated. Against a background of growing instrumentality in higher education (as a reflection

of a more general condition of performativity) I want to suggest an alternative to its influence on higher education's function. In particular I want to raise questions regarding the impact that such a movement has had on the role the university plays within society and the messages it sends to its stakeholders. Most importantly I want to use it as a lens through which to highlight what I see as the implicit dangers for the academic and its wider communities. In doing this I do not seek to negate the role of instrumental, competence-based education within higher education institutions, but to argue for a balance which will offer the university a distinct and long-term role in vocational higher education.

This is a deliberate attempt to see the engagement of all students with the institutions of higher education as an educative endeavour that is part of the human condition. The contestable position taken here is that human possibilities are created by individuals themselves. These possibilities are aspirational and, although shaped by a social context, they belong to the person enacting them who bears responsibility for them. However, these possibilities are not universal, in that they could define a notion of human nature. They may, nevertheless, be considered to be more or less worthy for humanity.

## **2. A SKETCH OF HEIDEGGER'S NOTION OF EDUCATION AND HIS CRITIQUE OF MODERN HIGHER EDUCATION**

In Heidegger's insightful interpretation of Plato's allegory of the cave he looks at the notion of change as central to the revelations of truth. This provides the essencing notion of truth but not as confirmation of the idea or metaphysical form of an idea but as revealing unhiddenness of the form through the deconstruction of the notion of the idea that formulates our contextualized ability to know. Heidegger's contribution here is to reveal the 'goodness' apparent in the educated person as unencumbered knowing, an experience that verges on the divine, one where the revelation is in itself the changing of the being of the individual. This educative process is discussed by Heidegger as, "genuine education takes hold of our very soul and transforms it in its entirety by first of all leading us to the place of our essential being and accustoming us to it," (1998:161). In doing this truth becomes a transformative notion and, "the essence of truth and the sort of

transformation it undergoes here make possible ‘education’ in its basic structure,” (1998:161).<sup>75</sup>

Heidegger is certainly aware, as is Plato, that such revealing has moral responsibilities in being liberated, for their chain in the cave is being let loose but is yet to reach real freedom when the historic idea of what is, is replaced by the comportment of what might be possible. This phase in the allegory of the cave and the subsequent return to the cave bear on the responsibilities that the educated person has and the moral power with which he or she has to exert the clarity of their vision. This educational odyssey is where university education has a distinctive role. It is where Giroux (2002) sees the university in crisis. The shadows are of individual and social agency defined through market notions of individualism, competition and consumption. This ‘encaving’ of higher education succeeds in taking one sphere of public debate where democratic issue can be discussed are lost under the sovereignty of the market. He goes further to complain that academic administrators no longer have to display intellectual reach and civic courage but instead they are expected to bridge the world of academe and business.

Thompson (2001) attempts to reveal the issue that Heidegger highlighted in the nature of education. The crux of the argument is that the nature of truth is not in being but in the dynamic of becoming. This shift in the certainty, indeed the power of the holder of knowledge is where Heidegger wants teachers to interpret and illustrate for students in terms of a learning experience. In terms that confront the cynic Sextus Empiricus,<sup>76</sup> Heidegger challenges teachers to risk breaking from the ‘enframed’ reality of their structured world to enable themselves and indeed their students to see the technical constructed reality of the world for what it is – a simulacra of the reality which could be. This foreshortening of our world view is developed by Heidegger in his ‘*Plato’s on teaching the truth*’ which is a reinterpretation of the nature of Platonic *paideia* arguments for the worth of education in his famous allegory of the cave.

I have explored the significance of the Plato’s analogy of the ‘cave’ for Heidegger as the development of the notion of *Paideia*. For him:

<sup>75</sup> This form of revelation is more enjoyably expressed and encapsulated in the Joni Mitchell recording of ‘Clouds’.

<sup>76</sup> Sextus Empiricus’s (1981) cynical account of formal learning process is a point in case. The separation of learning from teacher and in turn from learner is absurdly parody by him in the opening arguments in Chapter 1 of *Against the Professors*.

“the learning process extends without limit before its own fund of experience to bear on interpreting such notions of fundamental import to the leading of life. The function of the university, as the pinnacle of our educational system, is to assume and to remain faithful to just such a role, regardless of consequence, because acceding to the nature of its task, the university finds itself under a categorical imperative to advance the understanding of intentionality before all other service to society, whether in the interest of church, state or civil society. Pedagogy, insofar as it remains in touch with the perseveres of its original Greek spirit, eschews the rational imperative of relevance in all the forms that fitness for purpose may take, such as utility and expediency, on the one hand, or conformity to convention and custom, on the other,” (Heidegger *in* Allen and Axiotis, 2002:30).

What is more:

“to grasp the task of education is thus also ready to know something essential about the structure of the university, that it cannot be an instrument of social engineering or, more generally, simply a *means* to an end, without ceasing to *educate*. Professional training and liberal education, though differing in orientation, both miss the mark in the same respect in that they both seek to perfect the pupil, each after its own fashion, as effective *bourgeois* or universal *citoyen*,” (Heidegger *in* Allen and Axiotis, 2002:31).

The defining trait of the university is explored in detail in Heidegger’s controversial Rectoral Speech of 1933<sup>77</sup> (Heidegger, 1985). In it he calls for the defence of the university through the self assertion of its community of scholars against the enframing by the fragmentation of its essential purpose of knowing and questioning into an ungrounded, technologically-driven institution.<sup>78</sup> This is to be done by the faculty facing in openness and through uncertainty the future in the spirit of the past of the ancient Greeks. This is the temporality of the essential university and its task to risk to face its fate, yet, in facing it, should not accept this fate but develop a knowing

<sup>77</sup> The superficial nationalism of this address is discounted by McNeill (1999) and I accept his reasoning here particularly in reference to the second half of the speech. The use of the text is not an attempt to summarise the political and self-serving nature of what may have been Heidegger’s behaviour or to comment on the extensive literature that exists on that subject.

<sup>78</sup> Grineski in a biting and questioning commentary on the technological commercialisation and commodification of teaching and learning see it has “increasing the emphasis on training (i.e., learning to do), over education (i.e., learning to know)”, (2000:22).

resistance to it. In this sense it is a revolt through self-assertion against, “the social powers that are bent upon bringing it to heel, insofar as they are ultimately threatened by the institutionalising of the practice of interpreting intentionality and transcendence in a free and unfettered way,” (Heidegger in Allen and Axiotis 2002:31).

“Despite the university’s efforts to maintain a theoretical detachment from state and market interests, secularization does not result in independence from values but the replacement of one set of religious values with other, more abstract ones” (Heidegger *in* Allen and Axiotis, 2002:43).

One could interpret Heidegger’s speech, as McNeill does, as a call for academic freedom in the form of, “a defence of philosophical and intellectual freedom, a defence grounded in a resolute openness of questioning bound to a responsibility toward the historical origins of Western thought, which is to say a responsibility toward the future in its entire uncertainty and fragility. And it is this, and this alone that the university, grounded in philosophizing, ‘serves’ the broader community and its political direction,” (McNeill, 1999:153). Indeed, Heidegger’s view is rather more pragmatic and modern than implied by McNeil. He claims that academic freedom is not genuine, “since it was only negative. It meant primarily freedom from concern, arbitrariness of intentions and inclinations, lack of restraint on what is done and left alone,” (1985:476). Such academic freedom is unlikely to be accepted now as implied by Heidegger then.

### **3. WHAT DO UNIVERSITIES DO?**

More precisely, I wonder what higher education institutions provide for the personal development of their students? Implicitly, I am reflecting on whether the legitimacy of higher education’s contribution to the defining and fulfilment of personal ‘well-becoming’ can go uncontested. To start I want to ask what, if any, is the essential domain of institutional higher education? Or might it merely be the summative functions needed to deliver its own accredited degrees or its own curricula? If, as I will argue, the function of higher education is difficult to isolate, then the question might appropriately be asked as to what constitutes its differential nature and value in the world at large. Certainly, without a more distinct purpose its existence as a

separate institution is questionable.<sup>79</sup> Behind these questions is a simple observation that the scope and nature of higher learning is evidenced in-the-world to be more than the function of a particular form of institution. Higher level performance is found in action in many spheres. Simple examples of workplace professional development can be called upon to support this, as can the less structured higher level skills involved in parenting and the caring professions. Managers, craftsmen and house-parents all make decisions and act in ways that most functional analysis would position at the higher end of any skills level. However, it is not accredited, for there is no external gain in doing so.<sup>80</sup>

#### 4. WHAT MIGHT A UNIVERSITY EDUCATION BE?

My proposal, albeit controversial, is as follows: that which differentiates the institution of higher education is not the content of the curriculum but the future orientation of the scholarly community which it creates and nurtures. Within such a function the universities' epistemological mission is achieved through research and scholarship, which are viewed as necessary conditions for the appropriateness of the universities' learning missions. Should this be acceptable then traditional disciplines are not critical, although they clearly offer a common structure for scholarly pursuit. I am not arguing for a fully negotiated curriculum between student and teacher, for discipline-based traditions certainly have the benefit of manifesting our historical links with others, but dependency upon them can also lead to a dominating interest in the *poiesis* of learning rather than the *paideia* of humanity.

Should the learning become only instrumental instruction (either in the formal engagement or in the relationship the student builds with the subject) the process can become impersonal and lack a realisation in humanity. Where higher education programmes are designed to function as 'licensed practitioner gateways', certain content will be prescribed, but even here the curriculum content is secondary to the notion of the higher education institution, for its specific and distinctive task is to facilitate learning as shaping the identity we choose for ourselves with awareness of our commonality in humanity. University education ought to provide more than

<sup>79</sup> The interesting issue of 'virtual' universities is not discussed here but raises real issues for the nature of higher education. Equally relevant is the growth in work-based learning projects offered by higher education institutions which are firstly, and significantly, not called education, as well as the use of the term 'learning organisation'.

<sup>80</sup> Consider the level of problem-solving skills required for an illiterate adult to function in our society and compare those to the skills exhibited by some undergraduates.

what Sen (1993) calls the ‘functionings’ of life. It should concern itself with how these functions provide a trajectory into the possibilities of what the student and the tradition might become. This involvement identifies higher education institutions as being about the future prepared for and revealed today. It brings future possibilities into the present through dialogue and is sustainable in this pursuit, if funded by public money, as long as universities are trusted by their host communities both to supply students able to sustain their immediate economic well-being, and to add to the notion of an educated public.

This view may be contested both by those who see the function of higher education institutions as an initiation into a discipline and by those who see it predominantly as a provider of trained or trainable economic agents. Typical of an enlightened interpretation of the former view is that held by Blake et al. (1998). Although they clearly want to counter a competence model of higher education, their reliance on traditional disciplines to provide “methods of enquiry and critique” (1998:37) is too exclusive, for those skills need not rest on the notion of the tradition of the subject matter. This position at its worst risks inauthenticity and bad faith and at its best offers only one mode for authenticity’s realisation.

The second position, based on the economic functionality of higher education, is a view which is resonant with the function of mass<sup>81</sup> higher education to provide graduates for the job market and which has come to hold political sway. Education in this context might be considered as simply conferring “credentials that employers can use to select workers and to determine relative wages and salaries,” (Lange, 1998:18-9). This interpretation of higher education’s function uses relative rates of return on social and private investment to measure its worth and to determine its effectiveness. Both views have relevant points to make, not about the nature of the educative development of a student through the engagement with the learning community of higher education but about the nature of the inputs and outputs of the process. I am interested in how the community assists or fails to assist in the student’s realisation and construction of his or her authentic identity as part of humanity. I am interested in the dialectic which occurs inside the black box of input and outcome and the changes it makes to our authenticity.

<sup>81</sup> I note the use of the word ‘mass’ here, both as it is commonly used to refer to increased participation but also in the context of Heidegger’s *Das Man* with the closing off of identities and potential of abuse of power it offers to those Others who control the anonymity of the masses.

## 5. EXISTENTIALISM: BEING RATHER THAN HAVING

The methods of liberalism as already discussed are not the only, nor necessarily the best, measure of the utility or worth of learning. Williamson for one suggests we might consider, “how far they promote the imagination, and release the potential within all human beings to enrich the lives of others, seize their own destiny and contribute their distinctive knowledge and understanding to the solution of collective problems,” (1998:7). The existential emphasis of Williamson has important implications for the structuring of learning experiences in the world-of-education as becoming. It requires the student to engage with the resources made available to him in a way that seeks to reveal his humanity. Such a position goes beyond the extrinsic instrumentality of managerialism, even when it serves a learned community, and considers higher education in the context of the realisation of the potential of its students as one of its core functions. I do not mean here to jump to the assumption of a privileged potential that is absolute, timeless and universally true of what it is to be human. The notion of a human nature that this implies is absurd to the existential perspective. The possibilities I am concerned with describing are those which may offer the greatest potential, not merely for human existence, but for human flourishing as part of being-in-this-world in *Mitsein*, as part of humanity. They involve a personal search for what values and beliefs might be worth holding for the benefit of the individual intellectually, socially and emotionally. They are the possibilities of excellence, not the competitive singularity of being the best.

University education should have a special prerogative in this area of personal becoming-in-the-world. If universities forgo their obligations, voluntarily or because of financial pressures, society will lose one of its beacons for what humanity might be and will permanently suffer if it is not replaced. In fulfilling these obligations, universities should offer students the skills and time to reflect on the human condition and contribute to students’ questioning of what is human existence within the experience of scholarly activities.<sup>82</sup> These are issues essential to the being of learned dialogues and not just for integrating within, or as a core, curriculum issue. They concern our very being and future condition, and asking them prevents passive acceptance and a drifting on the tides of self-interested performativity. They are binding, I believe, on any student who uses the resources of his community to partake in higher learning. Of course I am

<sup>82</sup> This line of reasoning is followed by Nussbaum (1997).



not proposing that the realisation of all kinds of human possibility can be achieved independently of the prevailing social conditions (or that the university necessarily has a role in social therapy<sup>83</sup>) but I support the scholarly community as an authentic agent in confronting our every-dayness.

The realisation of opportunities is a dialectical process that can either enhance a personal feeling of worth or well-being or leave the individual feeling alienated. In this, teachers as scholars have a purpose in providing places for the, “identification and assessment of human possibilities in our grappling with the problems of human good, the quality of life and how we are to live our lives,” (Schacht, 1994:150). But it is not found in a set of universal imperatives such as the rights of liberalism or indeed managerialism. The liberal notion of rights, even universal rights, is based on individualism and self concerned-ness: it encourages an inauthentic, prescriptive life, structured upon such rights. (Even if rights are a necessary constituent of society, this view risks unbalancing the counter of rights: communal obligations.)<sup>84</sup> In a compelling argument, Warnock (1998), in sympathy with MacIntyre, proposes that rights are best conferred through a legal process and that what stands prior to them are fundamental moral principles which ought to be respected in humanity. The contribution of her argument here is in accepting that humanity has priority over the individual, not in an either/or way (for we are humanity) but in a way of being; as a way of worthy well-being.

## 6. EXISTENTIAL RESPONSIBILITY

The existential responsibility for our own educational decisions probably starts from asking what we can trust as being truth. The answer to this should not be simply accepted as a gift from an authority and worn like a garment for the reflected benefit of the donor: it requires personal involvement. It is learning as a *praxis* of education, as a way of becoming. The responsibility of the learner is to engage with the learning situation as a whole, not in a narrow way of being instructed about being in the world but through experiencing being-in-the-world. To engage passively with learning

<sup>83</sup> Smith indeed in a critical essay on MacIntyre’s views of the university proposes just that claiming that teaching can be therapeutic on three levels; resolving compulsiveness in disciples, demystifying the university system and helping people “think with each other” (2003:322).

<sup>84</sup> Bottery puts it thus: “it is only through the creation of a healthy and flourishing community that rights can be given and exercised,” (1999:112).

for its instrumental and not its intrinsic challenges is, in Sartre's terms, education as instruction: it is in bad-faith. Existential ideas contest<sup>85</sup> the emphasis put on the formal method that seeks an understanding through theoretical knowing and a desire to possess knowledge.

Educational *praxis* is action, action incorporating judgements arrived at by contemplation and informed by worthy ends. It assumes that there is no dichotomy between theory and practice and recognises both as "distinctive modes of existence," (Troutner, 1975:194). He goes on to say, "(T)he basic distinction also suggests different kinds or styles of thinking, existential or primary thinking which is characterised by concern and involvement and the theoretical or secondary reflection with its distance and disinterestedness.". This has clear implications for our ability to know, and the way in which institutions – structured to assist in our knowing – should go about constituting themselves as learning communities which share mutual respect and responsibilities with their members in a project of co-operative enquiry. We need to understand and decide for ourselves how our world is and how we ought to engage with the humanity of it. Clearly this approach does not preclude the functionalities of securing employment but it also seeks to offer personal opportunities for development.

The objectification of modernity can readily slip into our educational discourses as we saw in chapter 1. Standish (1997) highlights the danger of assuming things are there only to be used as raw material for human use and consumption. Reflecting on Heidegger's concept of "ready-at-hand" and "present-at-hand" he illustrates the difference in that, when functioning correctly, things become what they are when used, not when they are observed: they are only when we make them what they are, and, "in this way the impression comes to prevail that everything man encounters exists only insofar as it is his construct" (Heidegger 1977:27). The danger is deeper, however, for those who hold this view can quickly see that they too are no more than raw material for others, and act accordingly. The point is that if education becomes no more than a taken-for-granted, instrumental service which is ready-at-hand, personal engagement is limited to its perceived instrumental use.

The educative process can reveal the potential of what is ready-at-hand through allowing us to become involved in ways which are more than treating that which we encounter as mere equipment for something else:

<sup>85</sup> Jaspers does state, "No authority, no rules and regulations, no supervision of studies must be allowed to hamper the university student. He is free to 'go to the dogs,'" (1960:67). Further, Habermas suggests that Jaspers come to accept that purely methodically-determined sciences are wholly procedural and can no longer provide substantive unity amidst the unpredictably splintering canon of disciplines (1987:16).

objects and not subjects. There is a danger that students may, “come to think of themselves in terms of sets of competencies aptly summed up in standardised records of achievement, and to see education in these limited terms.” Further, the, “supposed priority of the student’s autonomy is emphasised through the principles of the negotiated curriculum and the students’ ownership of learning where the student selects from a variety of prepared packages and where learning is, in fact, resource-driven” (Standish, 1997:453-4). The dangers of standardisation are taken up by Allman and Wallis who state, “Once the commodity had been standardised then the market mechanisms of quality and price can be allowed to operate unchecked, and the prevailing discourses of managerialism of the British education system bears testament to its excesses,” (1997:117).

## **7. PASSION AND BEING**

Jaspers (1960) offers an interesting alternative to student as object in his existential model of higher education. Central to Jaspers’ notion of a university is that it is for the scholar who is passionate about learning; it is the existential of being-educated through his own efforts. By engaging with a project and by applying a schematic approach, the student affirms with his whole person a given educational ideal. In the existentialist sense, “University education is a formative process aiming at meaningful freedom. It takes place through participation in the university’s intellectual life” (Jaspers, 1960:65).<sup>86</sup>

This facing up is not without personal risk, for it can threaten the self-esteem and identity of anyone who grapples with what may be the authentic truth of their being. But as I explored previously, the communal involvement in the self-authenticating of members of the community assists in confronting and then finding meaning in the every-day-ness of our existence: students would need to feel sufficiently comfortable to be prepared to risk reflection on themselves as becoming rather than being. As Bonnett proposes, “A concern for authenticity would lead to a shift of emphasis in which education is regarded as a process in which the expression and development of the individual through the acquisition of authentic understanding is central,” (1978:60). I acknowledge that this is unlikely to be the result of joining a learning community but would take time for the mutuality of trustworthiness to be recognised.

<sup>86</sup> For a detailed discussion of Jaspers’ contribution see Wyatt (1982).

The establishment of such a context which both matches and confronts expectation is, however, a dangerous business. The danger lies, particularly for those new to the discourse of higher education, in the hegemony of profit invading the truth-seeking ethos of Jaspers' ideal university. Universities owe a responsibility of critical self-scrutiny, not only to their financial health but also to their present and future communities whose adults are and will be entrusted to them to pursue scholarly activities. In this project they will need to accept that their students, if they are prepared to engage with opportunities as self-critical scholars, are vulnerable to the reality defined for them. That reality imposes an obligation upon universities to reflect on the values of their host communities as well as their moral obligations to the humanity of the future and, through their own autonomy, to offer students choices associated with the development of authentic, autonomous decision-makers: choices which question the perceived reality.

The context best suited to a situation in which the authentic self can make choices on how it will reveal itself, both to itself and to others, may be one in which the trustworthiness of self and others, amongst other virtues, can be expected. This trustworthiness is more than the mere reliance on rules of engagement and exchange; it is deeper and reflects the commonality of being as humanity. From an existentialist position, managerialism fails to provide an environment where the student can risk being more than an observer of a fixed context and proactively engage in a dialectical relationship with his own being through education. For Sartre, lack of this active engagement destroys the individuality of the person in the tantalisation of the event by others. Its personal reality can only be reclaimed by *praxis*; otherwise it leaves the student with a feeling that he has only passive choices.

## 8. WHERE SHOULD WE LOOK?

The discussion of liberalism and managerialism raises questions as to the underlying and implicit values which drive the function of institutionalised higher education in providing the context in which students as authentic individuals can formulate and test their decisions about themselves for-themselves. I propose that these questions are better answered by an existential *praxis* than by liberalism or managerialism. To reach this view my arguments have attempted to avoid the critique that White (1997a) directs at the pursuit of a single aim for education. They present a pluralistic view of the definition of excellence arrived at in good-faith. This educational ethos is what Barnett calls the, "value background of higher education," (1994:8). It extends beyond the custodianship of knowledge to

reflect the social and individual responsibility of universities in the preparation of their students for a successful and fulfilled life. I recognise White's concept of "consumer sovereignty" (1997a:14) but we are not all, always, consumers; and when we do consume, we do not all do so in the same way or for the same reasons.

The dangers for the university sector are clear: if it ceases to stretch society then it fails in one of its functions. Those universities which do fail will cease to receive the support of society. They will lose this support by their own actions, through compromising their distinctive benefit to society by changing the community of scholars into a sponsored training park for accountants and gardeners.<sup>87</sup> This is not to argue that the exclusion of vocational skills is a necessary requirement for the status of a university – quite the reverse. What it is, however, is an argument against the passive activity of training for a profession that stands *in place of higher education*.

My point is that preparation for the world as revealed through the exploration of new frontiers, with others, ought to be an opportunity for us all, giving us the choice to perform to the limits of our own imagination and efficacy. It is a function of the university to encourage and assist in that task. This is not élitism, for it is open to everyone whose abilities, involvement and commitment to the future through scholarly activity are appropriate to join this community – a community that has no superiority over any other learning community. However, under pressure from a short-termist market and in order to compete for students, the temptation for universities is to neglect the well-being of their students and concentrate on measuring the financial aspect of success. In doing this, universities may be compromising the trusting relationship within which personal well-being can flourish. They risk the loss of community, for they ask scholars to participate on terms that they could reasonably reject.

## 9. EXPERIENCE EDUCATION

Collier (1988) has suggested that higher education generally has failed to grasp its responsibility. It has failed to provide the opportunities for students to confront their inner motives and real values in a manner in which their personal integrity is safeguarded. Collier suggests that this can only be achieved through deep, authentic understanding developed through

<sup>87</sup> Similar warnings were given by Dewey when discussing higher education and social efficiency (1966:118-21).

‘existential’ responses to issues (1993:290). The implication of this for higher level education is the establishment in students of the following:

“...a depth of honesty or integrity in searching out their motives, a depth of respect for other persons in everyday reality, and a scrupulous concern for matching their understanding to the evidence, which can transcend the pressures of group loyalties, academic fashions, local cultures, self justification and so on. And if he accepts the emerging consensus of views and assumes that such qualities cannot be acquired through explicit instruction or overt training, but only delicately elicited by like-minded people in a climate of mutual respect and trust, he will find himself committed to certain educational procedures,” (Collier, 1988:25)

Collier’s prerequisite of an atmosphere of trusting and mutual respect is predicated on the moral commitment of academic staff. However, to put this in a contemporary context I want to make reference to the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (Dearing, 1997). Although I find the Report light on its discussion of values it does, as far as it goes, support Collier, listing values which are, “shared through higher education and without which higher education, as we understand it, could not exist,” (1997:79). These include: freedom of thought and expression, a willingness to listen to alternative views, a preparedness to take account of how one’s own arguments will be perceived and a commitment to consider the ethical implication of different findings and practices. These values, I propose, are possible to reveal and to face authentically in an atmosphere of mutual trust.

Nussbaum, when reflecting on the function of higher education as being more than learning facts and mastering skills, offers a sentence which has resonance with this paper. For her, higher education, “means learning how to be a human being capable of love and imagination,” (1997:14). However, there needs to be a word or two of caution here and they are offered by Blake et al.. In an essay of disturbing insightfulness on the aims of higher education offered by Dearing, they comment:

“To put it starkly, the narrow sense of learning which pervades the Dearing report, as so many official publications about education, higher and otherwise, makes rational deliberation impossible. Moreover, rational deliberation requires the rich vein of insight that learning together can provide but which is precluded by the thin individualism which we also find in Dearing. A society formed on Dearing’s implicit views of learning could not make sense of itself and its world; the graduates of this kind of higher education could not, simply, understand what higher education was for. They could recall that a degree improves your job prospects, but that is another matter,” (1998:64).

## 10. TEMPORALITY, PRACTICE AND REFLECTION

Action is ordinarily a present phenomenon mediated by – although not contingent upon – our past and our future. We act upon our environment with learned skills and competences with the intention of satisfying the motivation to act. In doing so we reaffirm through reconstruction in the present a past and create a new disposition to act in the future. The clarity and feasibility of our imagined futures reflects how our existing self resolves the complexity of its present in becoming its future. Thus each act has a temporality revealed in our preparedness to act either in a repetitive yet authentic and self-critical way or in an instrumental, closed-off and inauthentic restatement of what we were. The duration of this being or becoming environment is calibrated in forms of time of which the abstract clock-time is the most global. Time itself has a temporal heritage and Rämö (1999:317) has related the Aristotelian notions of *kronos* and *kairos* to notions of action:

- *Episteme* theoretical activity is a form of action to reduce the complexity of the future so that it can extend the knowable present and reduce the uncertainty of the future;
- *Technē* enables the future to be engaged and interpreted as a series of presents; and
- *Phronesis* facilitates the integration of the temporal state and the selection of future based on the authentic of the present.

Each form of action is a preparation for a future to come.

The deposition which precedes *praxis* is *phronesis*; that is the comportment of our activities towards our temporal being. It is developed through reflection on one's own behaviour and is different from reflection on oneself as a skilled agent in a range of competencies appropriate for a defined role in society. *Phronesis* revealed through *praxis* has an internal history rather than the external historic notion of *technē*<sup>88</sup> and is promoted by wisdom and judgement. Through *praxis*, ends become internal to actions themselves. Reflection in *praxis* is not remedial in the sense of achieving some 'given' ideal; rather, it is iterative, an engagement with oneself with others. This is not a form of rigidity as critics of *phronesis* proclaim as

<sup>88</sup> Heidegger diagnoses modern technology as *Ge-stell*, 'enframing', a process of extracting which transforms the natural world into *Bestand*, 'standing-reserve' – a state in which objects *per se* no longer exist in or for themselves, but only in or for something else. Their purpose is realised through *technē*. (See Heidegger's 'The Question Concerning Technology', 1977.)

proposition-bound but a form of imaginative interpretation of the world. Noel (1999a) addresses this point with the linking of *phantasia* – imagination – within the notion of *phronesis*.

The mistake that Noel identifies is the use of the term in a sense of practical syllogism that is a strange and ungrounded use if attributed to Aristotle. Dunne's (1993) interpretation of *phronesis* is more hermeneutical in the sense that he explores it as part of judgement of what is right as in morally correct. In this sense Dunne links *phronesis* with the *praxis* of action in the world, based on the practices of being in the world and directed by good character. The temporalisation of this position and the main insight that I attribute to Noel is not the introduction into *phronesis* of *phantasia*, important as this is, but the forward-looking perspective of imagination. This fully temporalises *phronesis* both in its direction of comportment and in its integrity. Noel concludes that the, "beliefs, desires, images and goods, perceptions and interpretations that are involved in this sense of *phronesis* [which incorporates *phantasia*] are through both deliberation and insight," (1999a:285) (brackets added).

Although there are many interpretations of *phronesis* ranging from rationality in decision-making through situational responsiveness to moral disposition (see Noel, 1999b) each is but a perspective from which we can conceptualise and scientifically research the notion of being. This separation of the way of being is problematic, for *phronesis* is the being of *phronomos*; it is a way in which the practices of *phronesis* are disclosed against a background of being-in-the-world. It is about realising with others the potentials for them whilst living the authentic potentialities of one's own *Dasein* as teacher, professor or friend.

*Phronesis* is developed through reflection on one's own behaviour and is different from reflection on oneself as a skilled agent in a range of competencies appropriate for a defined role in society. Reflection in *praxis* is not remedial in the sense of achieving some 'given' ideal; rather, it is iterative, an engagement with oneself with others. Existential reflection is not contemplatively dwelling on what might have been in a futile attempt to match what I am with the totality of what others might expect me to be. It is a learning exploration and is a process of evaluating one's future possibilities for being, given the reality of one's current existence. It is the realisation of what one is, and the diagnostic consideration of the activities necessary to secure what one might be. In this it is a condition of self-knowledge and conscious self-trust of a future identity. Without it our actions risk unquestioned inauthenticity brought about by ritual and tradition.

Returning to Heidegger we can find a useful view of what autonomous reflection within the *praxis* of becoming might be. For Heidegger the future



positioning of our being is constrained by the parameters of our social system within which we can express ourselves. Our understanding of our identity will evidentially change as we interpret the accumulated experience of the choices we have made from the range of preferences available to us. This understanding of ourselves in our every-day-ness is, as Heidegger proposes, a making ourselves at home in the world so that we might more thoughtfully act as part of humanity. Thus, we seek our authenticity through a hermeneutic self-understanding which is achieved essentially through self-interpreting our potential. It is this dialectic process which enables us to function autonomously in a world where being-with others is the natural state of affairs and where reflection within our own tradition is how we reveal our identity to ourselves. Without such reflection we can be tempted to fling ourselves into whatever possibilities present themselves, for we have no sense of our limitations. Reflection that leads to the recognition of our authentic identity is a resolution of what our own possibilities are, and the acceptance of these as a different identity from that of our mutuality as part of humanity. There is no particular way of giving shape and meaning to a life, but one can grasp the responsibility for one's own future or rely on others to do that for one.

Heidegger's picture of Being-in-the-world appears as a seamless whole whose meaning is rooted in a generally tacit background understanding of our being in an historical context. We have no context-free notion of knowing, for the Cartesian distinction of subject and object fold in to the totalising merger in our being and our potential to be. Guignon explains this notion well and I shall return to it in the discussion of the temporalisation of *a priori* knowledge:

"When the world of significance is understood as made up of contexts of internal relations, there is no way to distinguish the 'essence' of an entity – what it is in itself – from its actual 'existence' within the totality. But if the essence/existence distinction is collapsed, then this seems to carry with it the downfall of *quid juris/quid facti* distinction that motivates Cartesian foundationalism," (1983:179).

This form of understanding requires us to consider the risk to the inauthentic self in the revelation of aspects of its potential identity in its common in-the-world-ness. This presents us with having to face the authenticity of *Dasein* and the anxiety this creates. To do this requires a trust in one's essential being and in those with whom the process is undertaken. This trusting of others cannot be based on their potential for self interest as this is an inauthentic interpretation of the plurality of self and other. Clearly there is a potential tension here between the revelation of authentic identity to the self, and the social meaning attributed to this in the

presence of others. However, by accepting that authenticity can be revealed in a range of different modes of being, existential trust can provide the fore-structure for its revelation.

This reflection, if it is to be genuine, requires a sense of self-assuredness of an authentic facing up to the anxieties predicated on the fear of one's own finitude. This facing up can threaten to reject the objectification of the social world. It is the management of this process, without inappropriate loss of both self-concern and being with others that is, I propose, a challenge that can be met by existential education which can claim common assent from those involved in education. Reflection and deliberation by authenticating members of the community assists them in finding meaning in their existence but, for this to succeed, they need to feel sufficiently at home to be prepared to risk themselves to become what they, as yet undisclosed, might be. The context best suited to that is one in which the trustworthiness of self and others can be expected. This trustworthiness is more than the mere reliance on rules of engagement and exchange; it is deeper and reflects the root of commonality of being-in-the-world.

In the next chapter I explore some of the temporal and community notions of learning, thinking and being within the form of the university. In so doing, I wish to take up the challenge of Harvey and Knight, who propose that, "if it is accepted that higher education should be helping students to learn something about themselves as people in the world, then there are hard questions about how this transformation is to be promoted. This is not just a matter of institutional structures, although that is a hard enough problem, but also one of pedagogy," (1996:134).

## Chapter 7

# A UNIVERSITY'S AUTHENTICITY IS IN ITS COMMUNITY

*“The thesis we have to expound and to sustain is that the Self is constituted by its relation to the Other; that it has its being in its relationship; and that this relationship is necessarily personal.”* Macmurray (1995:17).

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter I considered the notion of Heideggerian higher education. In the following chapters I want to explore what this means in terms of a community of practice, of what is learning and the impact of this on teaching. To start I want to explore the notion of community. So, what do we have in common with each other? Could it be the meaning we give to our shared reality? If so, how do we know that another shares the same reality? If *I* cannot, why then should *we* care for or respect the views of others? What else might draw us together – our humanity through learning? In this chapter I want to touch on some of these issues so as to sketch out an aim for higher education based on autonomous authenticity.

I accept that we are differentiated from others in that we experience ourselves as different and separate from others. Others do not bleed when we cut ourselves, nor do they feel the headache that we have. (Even if they could feel my pain as I do, how would I know?) Yet we are also part of each other in the way our identity is constituted through our history and in our humanity. What we are or might be is an expression of our being in the social context in which we live our communal lives. Although my identity is distinct from yours, we are, together, necessary for humanity to flourish. Indeed, I discover what humanity is through you, and the same should be

true for you. Further, temporal beings need not be satisfied with this. If we are not satisfied with what is we can imagine a state not yet present that can or ought to be brought into being by the choice of actions we make. How we come to understand and enact these possibilities is often only through the act of engagement with others, thus grounding our potentiality within a social temporal condition. This however is not to deny a form of collective past but to argue, unlike Jung, that this is not a matrix of myth, culture and history through which human experience unfolds but it is that which is within our unrealised being. It is as if we are an infinite ocean of temporality, with currents of episodic revelation within the ocean of common existence.

## **2. WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR OUR ACTIONS – A SUBJECTIVE ME OR OTHERS?**

The pluralism of our existence as separate from yet part of humanity is complicated by the way we are ‘thrown’ into a world of actions with and on behalf of others. Unresolved, this creates the potential for alienation of our selves from our social actions. Struggling to resolve our personal desires as separate from others can lead to a (sometimes traumatic) realisation of being part of others in a phenomenological world of mutually defining experiences. This negation of self as a singularity might concern some as leading to a nihilistic<sup>89</sup> lack of identity, loss of responsibility and a felt purposelessness of our actions. Associated with this may be, perversely, a foregoing of responsibility for one’s actions which may facilitate the insecurity of being-for-others but lost to oneself, as captured in that feeling of not being able to exist for others as one does for oneself. This may offend our sense of ‘ideal’ identity and can leave us with a feeling of guilt at the complicity of being in the world for others rather than being ourselves amongst others.

Of course, equally possible is ungrounded egocentricity, unguided by the values of the social context, which may lead to social alienation of a different kind. The everyday acceptance of passivity or the adoption of aggressive self-interest is a powerful force in our tradition of education and one which contributes to our exploitation by significant others. Avoiding excesses of either kind can be achieved through rational autonomous acts, by

<sup>89</sup> Nietzsche speaks of “(w)hat does nihilism mean? The highest values devalue themselves. The aim is lacking; ‘why?’ finds no answer,” (1968:9).

which we can resist over-dependency on the action of others. Such reclaiming of our authenticity requires courage.

### **3. HOW CAN WE KNOW THE DANCER FROM THE DANCE?**

Guignon offers an interesting insight here:

“With the rise of this subjective individualism, a transformed understanding of what is at stake in being human appears on the scene. The true self is to be found by a kind of inner concentration which draws together the different stands of the subjective life. There is a growing concern with being ‘integrated’, ‘centred,’ ‘fulfilled’ and this is understood as attainable only by severing one’s accidental ties to one’s community and history. Since I am self-defining and autonomous, my family, religion, occupation, and national origins and appendages or decorations may be cast off in my search for integration. My ethical and social relations are contrived, convention devices superimposed over me through the demands of expedience. With this picture of what it is to be human, the central question of recent times comes to prominence: the issue of being ‘true to oneself’, of being ‘authentic’. To achieve self-integration I must be faithful to my innermost impulses, needs, aspirations and feelings. The ideal of authenticity in turn leads to the problem of identifying this elusive and ephemeral point of the inner self: “How can we know the dancer from the dance?” (1983:18).

### **4. AUTONOMY, RESPONSIBILITY AND AUTHENTICITY**

What are our authentic possibilities and where are they located? These questions are central for the development of a concept of authenticity which precedes autonomy and can be found through the notion of learning proposed by Heidegger as a reflection of who we are as a route to being. This he called letting learning and is the most precious insight a teacher can offer. Authenticity, as I shall use it, is the stoic understanding of the existential structure of our being. This requires critical reflection on our identity acquired from being in-the-world with others and taking responsibility for this by choosing our own identity. Authenticity is thus bound up with an authentic comprehension of being in general and one’s

own being in particular. However, we need to recognise the intrinsic limitation of authentic behaviour and the unavoidability of inauthenticity in the practical necessities of living a social life. If, as Heidegger proposes, we interpret ourselves as I's or egos, then we create our identity as a kind of self-objectification. As such we understand ourselves as separate objects in need of gratification and security and tend to manipulate people and things to secure them. When this everyday egoism is intensified we become more inauthentic, and when it is alleviated we become more authentic.<sup>90</sup>

Authenticity is not just about 'now' choices but also about what we want to be; it involves aspiration, expectation and imagination, it is not a deterministic notion of being of what we are set to be – where education is a formal way of normalising the way of being in our world of confinement – but a way of seeking freedom from such normalisation. In this sense imagination is a force for freedom which can take us beyond the constraints of life as a sequence of now events and challenge the notion of an essential self which is behind our repertoire of social roles and against which our ideal self can be measured. It can show us that our futures are our own to be crafted, responsibly, from the possibilities that confront and are created by us; we are always in flux for we are always becoming. However, this can be problematic for an educational system which, according to Giugliano, is in danger of being the antithesis of authenticity. He suggests that a current strategy for success, "being perceived as 'bright', getting ahead, not to delve into oneself, but rather to understand how to meet outer expectations is to master the art of inauthenticity," (1988:152). This means that we teach students to behave for-others to secure their sanction for what the student might become and, in so doing, we seek to construct a permanent self in which others can have confidence.

## 5. THE UNCONCEALMENT OF BEING THROUGH LEARNING

Heidegger's understanding of the historical development of the representational character of metaphysical thinking is at the core of learning and thinking. Through his exploration of pre-Socratic thinking, Heidegger came to the understanding, which is also his major insight, that truth, *aletheia*, has to do with the lighting up of beings, their unconcealment, the way they become manifestly present in their being to man. Heidegger is clearest on learning when he talks about thinking. In the early pages of

<sup>90</sup> For a more detailed discussion see Zimmerman (1986).

*What is called Thinking* Heidegger identifies 'learning' with presencing<sup>91</sup> and with our capability to learn thinking. He says: "In order to be capable of thinking, we need to learn it first. What is learning? Man learns when he disposes everything he does so that it answers to whatever essentials are addressed to him at any given moment [presencing]. We learn to think by giving our mind to what there is to think about," (brackets added, Heidegger, 1968:4). He goes on to tell us: "*Most thought-provoking in our thought-provoking time is that we are still not thinking,*" (Heidegger, 1968:6). Before saying so, he clarifies the meaning of thought-provoking as everything that gives us to think. And the most thought-provoking gift is that of thought for we incline towards it (Heidegger, 1968:4). In other words, we are still not thinking because we have not learned to give our thought to what there is to think about. Essentially, we have not learned to give our thought to the matter of thinking. For Heidegger, the matter of thinking is to enquire into the essential nature of thinking: what is called thinking?

But it is not only we that have not asked this essential question. The matter of thinking has eluded the whole history of metaphysics. In fact, the tradition of thinking has been in error for it has identified thinking with representation and not with presencing (Heidegger, 1968:237). Consequently, we are still thinking traditionally and our thinking about thinking is within the representational matrix. With the difference in thinking in the modern age that is overwhelmingly dominated by science, it has become subservient to technology, has been reduced to representational-calculative and manipulative. Science has taken over the task of philosophy, but it proceeds with its explorations in an even more inadequate way; it does not even investigate the ontologies of various regions of beings such as nature, art, history and law. Rather, science has reduced its investigation to theories whose structural concepts are denied ontological meaning. The scientific method does not question the supposition of the categories it employs to explore co-ordinated areas of investigation (Heidegger, 1977:377). Or else, the peril of technical thinking, being within the domination of *Gestell* (enframing), in the name of production, profit, efficiency, serviceability, orderability, the desire for the new, and so on, seeks to establish and secure the power of humans over nature and presencing-itself (1977:287ff.). Of course, as previously indicated, the representational character of thinking dominating the scientific-technological world has its roots in the metaphysical tradition.

<sup>91</sup> "Presence itself? Presence itself is precisely presence of what is present," (Heidegger, 1968:237).

Representational thinking in the history of metaphysics can be identified as the process whereby the formation of an idea grasps and holds an aspect of reality, fixes and retains it in an objectified manner. This way it can be recalled in memory and can be thought about (Heidegger, 1968:39). This retaining of an object of thought within us is holding on to the objects of thought despite the flow of time. Thinking, as first influenced by Plato, has therefore traditionally been understood as the correctness of the correspondence of ideas arising subjectively, conforming to either an exterior or interior object of thought. Working within the subject-object polarity the source or foundation of representational thinking remains obscure (Heidegger, 1968:44-45); through representational thinking the answer to “what is called thinking?” cannot be achieved. It is not given to representational thinking to think into the ground and origin of thinking because it will turn it into yet another content of thought. For Heidegger, to learn means to let learn to think in another, more original way; one that is closer to the origins of thinking itself. But, “...we can learn thinking only if we radically unlearn what thinking has been traditionally,” (Heidegger, 1968:8). It is beyond the present scope to elucidate all the intricacies of the nature of traditional or representational thinking.

Under these circumstances the community of practice that might be the university is that which enables students to understand and then discover that, “entities do not show themselves as they are when forced into the metaphysical mould of enframing, the ontotheology which reduces them to mere resources to be optimised,” (Thomson, 2001:257). In this, Heidegger is arguing against the representational notion of subject-object notions of knowledge and in favour of originary thinking made possible by the presencing of teacher and student open to letting learning.

In our everydayness we attribute this socialised behaviour as evidence for something like a human nature. However, all it does is to conceal our openness by prematurely closing down our options to be. It offers us gratification and security through manipulation of people and things. To confront this dominating, static notion of self would strip away the comfort of a deterministic model of knowing what one *will* become, as projected through the expectations of others. To face the uncertainty of our identity is both courageous and unsettling, for it challenges us in what we are and what we intend ourselves to be, rather than accepting a spectatorial account of ourselves as reflected in being for others. This ‘challenging self’ is authentic, a dynamic, reconstituting self which gives meaning to itself by forging its own future, not in isolation but as part of the changing temporality of humanity.

Heidegger is insightful and helpful in exploring the communal constituent of the challenging self. He uses the term *Dasein* for this complex



notion of the being of ourselves yet to become with others. Dasein is the unfolding of the becoming of what we may become and the recognition of what is authentically ourselves in our actions, which leads to self-realisation. Bonnett has interpreted this point as, "(M)an is self-aware, meaning by this not merely that man differentiates self from other – becomes an object for himself – but that he is self-knowing, self-caring and thus has a sense of personal space," (1978:55). Our understanding of ourselves through 'care'<sup>92</sup> can be manifest, as Heidegger proposes, in making ourselves at home in the world with others through our solidarity with humanity.<sup>93</sup> If care is inauthentic it leads to the manipulation of others for selfish reasons, so for Heidegger it is only through authentic care that we let others manifest themselves in their own ways.

Heidegger's vision is thus not of separate individuals standing side by side to each other unconnected, as objects, isolated by their history and their present condition. For him what we are is necessarily primordial, revealed through the dialectic of being in the world with, and for, our and others' sakes. To quote Heidegger, "Being-in is *Being-with Others*. Their Being-in-themselves within-the-world is *Dasein-with*," (1962:155). This world view places our personal realisation as a collaborative endeavour, in that it requires the recognition of others to establish a truth upon which we can base a *praxis* of being which exceeds our solo efforts. In this sense we share and trust with others a common disclosure<sup>94</sup> of a many-faceted world. Olafson (1998), in developing Heidegger's position, proposes that, "each one of us would constitute a resource for our fellow human beings through the disclosure of the world that we affect and that we make available to them on countless informal occasions of social life as well as in the context of organised inquiries," (1998:45).

## 6. POTENTIALITY THROUGH COMMUNITY

How we actualise our potential is a communal act. We can choose to accept that our actions are grounded in our communality and choose, as Sartre suggests, to live as if humanity will mirror our actions<sup>95</sup> or we can try to

<sup>92</sup> "Care unifies the various structural aspects of Dasein's way of being," (Dreyfus, 1992:238).

<sup>93</sup> Heidegger does use the term 'fursorge' or caring for others within his writing but does not develop it as a theme.

<sup>94</sup> For Heidegger this is embodied in the notion of '*Mitsein*' which allows us to explore this connectedness.

<sup>95</sup> "For every man, everything happens as if all mankind had its eyes fixed on him and were guiding itself by what he does. And every man ought to say to himself 'Am I really the

alienate ourselves from humanity for our private goals. Should we choose to emphasise our communality then many of our autonomous decisions conceived in the form of ‘for-me’ or ‘for-them’ cease to have relevance. In this sense to act authentically is not tightly defined as actions which are only self-serving. Indeed the very nature of our being in a world with and as others indicates that much of our autonomously-chosen behaviours will be for others. It requires knowing and relying on oneself to act autonomously on what one believes to be correct within the limits of one’s behavioural repertoire.

This is not simply about knowing what is truth in an empirical sense but requires the experience of acting practically within one’s environment. It also requires an understanding that the being one might become is within one’s control. This understanding is an educative process that can be built on the dialectical engagement with others through dialogue. In this the commonality of language leads, as Gadamer has observed, to, “the birth of reason: the more that is desirable is displayed for all in a way that is convincing to all, the more those involved discover themselves in this common reality; and to that extent human beings possess freedom in the positive sense, they have their true identity in that common reality,” (1996:77). Dialogue may not be the only way to access one’s understanding of the pluralism of self but it is one of the most worthy educative engagements.

The option of acting for ourselves requires a form of consciousness which is recognisable as self-authorising and for which responsibility is taken. It is, “the capacity to raise the question of whether I will identify with or reject the reasons for which I now act,” (Dworkin, 1995:15). We bear the responsibility for our autonomous choices in how we choose to disclose ourselves in our everyday world. They lead to acts, if they are to have anything other than a perfunctory meaning, that shape our authentic social desires.

The coupling of autonomy and responsibility<sup>96</sup> carries the weight of existential freedom.<sup>97</sup> It presumes that actions are intended choices and are bounded by conditions of interpreted rationality. That is, choices based on options as they are believed to be within our social world. This pre-supposes

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kind of man who has the right to act in such a way that humanity might guide itself by my action?” (Sartre 1990b:20).

<sup>96</sup> Compare the similarity of Sartre’s definition of responsibility as, “consciousness (of) being the incontestable author of an event,” (1986:553) with that of Dworkin’s above.

<sup>97</sup> An interesting argument is made by Heidegger to try to reconcile Kant’s confusing comment on existential freedom in *The Essence of Human Freedom*, chapter 27 (2002). This is a revealed truth through which we come to know.

a selection from an evoked set of potentialities (which defines the actor's efficacy and his future<sup>98</sup> in relation to his past) that fill the content and reach of one's domain for action. This domain is necessarily grounded in the prejudices of one's own traditions.<sup>99</sup> We interpret the social world within a context we create from our personal and common history and act within it on this personal bias.<sup>100</sup> In this sense autonomous judgements are a conscious bridge between our being in the world now, for-others with their past, present and future and the freedom of the for-itself. It is our autonomy, as responsibility, which allows us to judge the risks involved in isolation from others, resisting falling into the collective unquestioning of the masses or opening ourselves to being one with others. Such judgements prevent open hostility or subservience towards those who thwart our authenticity, and allow the realisation of ourselves as part of a wide life space in which the respect we hold for others is important in the formulation of the values we hold.

## 7. BUT WHY?

The autonomous resolution of a balance between authentic and inauthentic behaviour might beg the question, why should the unit of well-being not be the egocentric rather than communal? Indeed, what benefit is gained from seeking to resolve our being as part of humanity when, if we fail, the risk of social alienation may be no greater than self-centredness? I shall point to the extreme to illustrate a potential dualism but acknowledge, to use Macmurray's<sup>101</sup> term, a more "practical stand point" for a resolution which favours neither extreme.

Consider the consequences of not seeking autonomous authentic selves. We are then vulnerable to being herded together with others who also want to avoid facing up to their own reason for being. This creates and supports an obstructive and destructive environment for the notion of 'individual' as humanity to flourish. It encourages socially divisive and dehumanising behaviours that negate the value of expression of personal feelings and

<sup>98</sup> Raz makes reference to the temporality of autonomy when he writes, "The autonomous person's life is marked not only by what it is but also what it might have been and by the way it became what it is," (1988:204).

<sup>99</sup> Here I am using prejudice in the same sense as Gadamer in that it is judgement, "rendered before all the elements that determine a situation have finally been examined," (1975:271).

<sup>100</sup> See for instance Derrida's (1992) discussion of the gift where he offers insights into the meaning attributed to actual and symbolic actions.

<sup>101</sup> See Macmurray 1995, Chapter One.

opinions. It offers the illusion that freedom of action is impossible, by teaching us through learned helplessness to abdicate responsibility. In so doing personal possibilities become those sanctioned by others. Cooper reminds us of Sartre on this issue when he discusses the tendency for bad faith to be inherent in our being-for-others. Cooper states, “patterns of bad faith can be the normal aspect of life for a very great number of people, and that susceptibility to it is ‘essential to human reality’,” (1996:120). We should not be seduced by the best (or worst) wishes of others when they hide a desire for exploitation.

This is manifestly the case in many dramas of everyday life and Heidegger recognises this within his notion of *das Man*. This is the mode of being that explicitly denies certain features of disclosability. It embraces the mechanism of technology as the dominant force for our socialisation and essentially gives us our anonymous public identities as technicians. “The individual in society who feels dependent and helpless in the face of its technically mediated life forms becomes incapable of establishing an identity. This has a profound social effect,” (Gadamer, 1996:73). In these circumstances human well-being is realistically restricted to an expression of humanity through personal identification with the production of worthy social institutions and artefacts. This may be a legitimate constraint on our authenticity but, if accepted unquestioningly, the anonymity which this brings can go too far, leading to alienation, bad faith and political exploitation. We risk losing our concern for ourselves and our identity.

Our relationship with others as humanity does not have to mean that we cannot find ways of understanding others as individuals. Buber (1966) has relevance here, for he asserts that the realisation of authenticity is through creative engagement with others in the form of dialogue with the totality of the other person. This means not just with the parts shown in the performances offered by others, which can fragment our assessment of them and can lead to them being treated not as a person but as an object or as an ‘it’. The de-humanisation and scapegoating of certain groups within our society has and does give evidence of the evil in which this abdication of personal responsibility can result. Under conditions of undifferentiated massification controlled by significant others the independence and self-centredness of the individual has much to recommend it paradoxically in securing the survival of humanity.

## 8. THE ALTERNATIVE TO THE ALTERNATIVES

It seems to me that neither extreme is valuable in the averageness of our everyday world. The common theme in both examples is the objectification

of ourselves in terms of others, and this objectification is dominant in the egocentric view of the world existing for oneself or even for humanity. What is needed is an openness to pluralistic coexistence in the world which allows for personal identity which does not see others as only a means to our understanding of our being in the world, which is unverifiable and unknowable to others. This should not be problematic for, quite simply, that is not how people are.<sup>102</sup> We reach out to others in times of distress and gain comfort from them.

There is an array of conditions which might be imposed on our actions and in some circumstances it might seem unfair or harsh to deem us personally responsible for our actions. I am thinking here of physical and mental coercion, manipulation and other forms of external intervention which legitimately remove the locus of control for action away from us. However, in the existentialist perspective this is contestable for if, “man is condemned to be free he carries the weight of the whole world on his shoulders; he is responsible for the world and for himself as a way of being,” (Sartre, 1986:553). I do not intend to consider this further here, other than to say that many practices justified as teaching and learning might qualify as obstructing autonomous acts and not as responsible involvement,<sup>103</sup> thus encouraging inauthenticity.

## **9. THINKING STUDENTS NEED A COMMUNITY TO FLOURISH**

As I have attempted to show, the seeking of authenticity and autonomy will offer challenges to the providers of higher education. The challenges outlined here include fostering a sense of responsibility for autonomous mediation of authentic judgements, decisions and actions which have little to do with any prescriptive content of the academic programmes. They support a form of education which works more with, “the meaning than content, and much more with intersubjectivity and plurality than with equality and unity,” (Gadotti, 1996:184).

Authentically to confront these issues is difficult and such engagements are anxiety-inducing for the student who is being asked, through the medium of education, to face the fear of their unknowable future, perhaps for the first time as an independent adult. To encourage this risk-taking, educational

<sup>102</sup> Macmurray (1995:17) explores this issue, concluding that we, “know we exist and that the Other exists, and that our existence depends upon the existence of the Other.”

<sup>103</sup> Peters has referred to these and similar actions as ‘despotic benevolence’ (1970:179).

practices have to accept the responsibility for potential harm and manipulation of the student through the form and content of the learning process. Institutions have to face the legitimate fears of both tutors and students involved in experiencing 'what might be', rather than resting on the safety of the observational security of theoretical reasoning.

An example might help to illustrate the fear I mean. Consider the anxious student swimmer who can explain the skills associated with swimming but will not, as yet, take her foot off the bottom of the pool. She may well attempt to fool herself and her coach by disguising this dependency as best she can. This self deception is only confronted when she is able to construct a future for herself where she can trust herself to function as others have predicted she would: to swim and not drown. This final autonomous decision to image a future unlinked from the experiences of the past, informed but not owned by others, is central to her becoming a swimmer. Making similar personal judgements is central to the purpose of existential university education if it is acting as a mode of revealing and reconstituting authentic identity.

The existential owning of one's ontological becoming is at the centre of the arguments made in the rest of the book, but they are not uncontentious and nor are they necessarily the only form of university education of value. What distinguishes them are their educational aims which are not based on the studying of a discipline as an object to be mastered but the contribution the engagement with a discipline, in a scholarly manner, can make to the authenticity of oneself. It is this which makes existential university education worthwhile. I am not claiming that the corpus of knowledge which makes up a discipline is not valuable; only that the relationship of teacher, student and discipline should be defined dialectically and interpreted ontologically.

Education that facilitates ontological change and security in its goals may help in freeing students and scholars to transcend their inauthentic self-concerns and thus avoid empty participation in social institutions. Universities can encourage this by practical commitment to the type of ideal community of scholars advocated by Jaspers (1960). For Jaspers, pedagogy is based on the flourishing of ideas through collaboration and communication as a dialogue.<sup>104</sup> This is more involving than mere curiosity. Dialogue is a medium through which the individual can be brought into cognisance of the whole of the collective experience of humanity, in its temporality, its history, its actions and its imagination.

<sup>104</sup> See for instance Gordon (1986) for a discussion of Buber's use of dialogue in the application of education to peace initiatives.

To engage in dialogue makes us face our authenticity and the anxiety this creates. It requires an act of autonomous revelation and means facing the fear of the self unsupported by the everyday context through which authenticity is protected. To do this requires trust in one's self and in those with whom the process of revelation is undertaken. It is problematic to achieve if based only on self-interest, where self-interest is conceived as any isolating concept ungrounded in the plurality of our identity.

If higher education institutions aim to build a future for society they need to offer a context which acknowledges differences in knowledge, insights or experiences without reifying them into inflexible and authoritarian status or role identities. They ought to offer a form of security which protects students from manipulation and ridicule so that students can trust themselves in their venturing into the unknown. While a broadly egalitarian commitment to mutual respect through dialogue might best frame such a pedagogical outlook, clearly some participants, usually the students, tend to benefit more than others. To prevent this real inequality of knowledge becoming the sole basis of the relationship and reducing it to a power transaction, all parties ought to commit to be learners from the experiences of each other. Such an interpretation of education has roots in the existential, critical pedagogy of Freire<sup>105</sup> (1993) which I recognise is not without criticism. However, that criticism is mainly, and explicitly, levelled at the practicalities of such a pedagogy and not at its essentially humanistic platform.<sup>106</sup> The point is surely that genuine solidarity and authentic community could be realised. To dare to do this requires the courage and the imagination to be creative in building a future which, in so doing, reveals one's vulnerabilities.

The realisation of self in a community of scholars has a specific mode for personal flourishing; learning. It is a community where thinking about thinking is allowed to flourish as well as thinking about other things. The next chapter takes up Heidegger's challenge which opens it – we must be ready to learn to think!

<sup>105</sup> For a discussion of Freire's views on higher education see Escobar et al. (1994).

<sup>106</sup> See in particular Burbules (1993) for more detailed discussion of these points.

## Chapter 8

# TRUSTING IN THINKING ABOUT KNOWING

*“We come to know what it means to think when we ourselves try to think. If the attempt is to be successful, we must be ready to learn thinking.”*  
Opening sentences of Heidegger’s *‘What is Called Thinking’* (1968:5).

### 1. INTRODUCTION

“The generation of new knowledge and understanding continually improves our quality of life on every level. Research is central to the success of our knowledge-driven economy, creating wealth and employment in both the UK and abroad. Universities and non-profit based research institutes are the UK’s primary source of trained experts in all areas of science and technology. Research also underpins our modern public services. Research base is essential for properly informed policy making, and for the effective implementation of those policies. In addition, research continually develops our understanding of the world around us and enriches in our cultural lives,”[http://www.hero.ac.uk/research/research\\_page170.cfm](http://www.hero.ac.uk/research/research_page170.cfm).

The approach I intend to take in this chapter is to conceptualize forms of learning, meaning and knowledge from an existential phenomenological perspective as temporal phenomena. In particular in this chapter I consider the notion of *a priori* knowledge, its forms, its temporality and its relationship with both the human and natural sciences. I start with Heidegger’s concept of trust.



## 2. HEIDEGGER AND TRUST

Heidegger never explicitly attempts the exploration of the notion of trust. As we have explored it, trusting is a transformative practice, one in which others are not only the trustor but the person is trustworthy within the relationship itself. However, through Heidegger's notions of background and disclosure and with the help of Olafson (1998) and Dryfus (1992). I hope to be able to offer an understanding which is essentially temporal, practical and involving. Heidegger's notion of background is critical here. It is the environments within which the practices<sup>107</sup> with which we operate within the world become the actuality of our knowing of the world as being-in-the-world. This avoids any Cartesian representation to explain our being in-the-world as observer and any *a priori* notion of explanations which are not empirically evidenced. It simply is an acceptance that our acts are meaningful, because what makes them meaningful is their shaping of what the world is understood to be and revealed as. Heidegger thus needs no abstract intellectual redress to explain out intentionality (why we trust) rather our intentional activities are grounded in our background of practice that give us the disposition to act in certain ways.

For Olafson, disclosure is associated with a possibility of active intervention in the course of events and, as such, it projects some future state of affairs that might be brought about. For this to be realized, humans must have some sort of working knowledge of the world in which things exist and how things work. This is the notion of common but not exclusive background proposed by Heidegger and revealed through the practices of disclosure. Being-in-the-world-with others adds both a pragmatic and temporal reliability and stability to our world. "What this comes to is an implicit acceptance of what we learn from those on whom we rely as being true – that is, the way things actually are in the world. This is the practice of truth-telling; it is at work everywhere in human life understood as a tissue of reciprocal understandings resting on responsibility and trust," (Olafson 1998:62). He continues, "more generally, by virtue of the disclosure character of human beings and the communicative character of the relationship between human beings, *Mitsein* as a whole becomes the matrix of a relation of these human beings to one another that centers on truth," (1998:62).

For us also the Heideggerian notion of *Mitsein* is critical to the practice of trust for if *Mitsein* is 'being-for-the-sake-of-others then our notion of trust

<sup>107</sup> The notion of practice as background is not indisputable. Searle (2000), for example, argues strongly against it in favour of a more cognitive proposition.

must be central to our relationship with others. To live with a sense of trust (and the reverse) will lead us to expect a sense of trust as the background of our actions. Should others exploit our disclosure in trust they violate the practices of being in the world with the others of his world and risk alienation or the reshaping of the future disclosure of others.<sup>108</sup> In the definition used earlier I included empathy as a central element in existential trust and the following is an example of how Heidegger's notion of empathy presupposes the public world as background:

"Empathy does not first continue being-with; only on the basis of being-with does 'empathy' become possible: it gets its motivation from the unsociability of the dominant modes of being-with," (1962:162), and,

"our analysis has shown that being-with is an existential constituent of being-in-the-world," (1962:163).

The background provides the conditions necessary for people to pick out objects, to understand themselves as subjects, and generally to make sense of the world and their lives. The background of practices explains how things in our world show up as meaningful; and how we are able to act intelligibly. Hence the background of practices is what we seek to find within trust. The background of practices is revealed through disclosure and discovering within the background. It is through disclosure in particular that we are able to focus on what, and what is appropriate, to do in certain circumstances. This 'pre-disposition' to act is not rule bound but is existential in that the behaviour is not governed by externalities and rules but by being with others in the world.

This then is the basic claim of Heidegger; disclosure, "is meant to point to same sort of abilities or coping skills – abilities pointed to by explaining our understanding in terms of a disclosure ability-to-be, or noting the way mood 'attunes' or 'disposes' us towards certain possibilities with the world," (Wrathall, 2000:109). We thus have the criteria for trust, as a practice that owes its existence to the existential of appropriate behaviour for coping with our background. But this is surely not enough for, as Luhmann (1990) and others have pointed out, trusting is temporalised at the edge of certainty. Heidegger revealed this temporalisation through his position on disclosure which is itself temporal. The argument is developed in Chapter 68 of *Being and Time* where Heidegger discusses the temporality of disclosure in general.

<sup>108</sup> Consider the trust of children to parents, this responsibility is readily accepted by parents, the futural notion of trust offered in promises and the relationship between notions when one comes to distrust other (the Turks and Greeks in Cyprus).

The constituent parts of disclosure are temporalised as understanding, “made possible primarily by the future, and moods are made possible by having been, the third constitutive item of the structure of care – namely, falling – has existential meaning of the *Present*,” (1962:396-7). Understanding concerns, “projecting a potentiality-for-being for the sake of which Dasein exists,” (1962:385). This reveals understanding as the way in which we come authentically or inauthentically to think of what we might be. I have resonance with the notion of self-trust, trusting in our potentials to be, as Heidegger says ‘coming-towards oneself’. This is temporal realisation of trust for what one might be grasping are the opportunities that are revealed through self trust and the practices of trust within the background, the context, of activities. It is within our care for what we might be, it is our concern for what we might be in the context of what others will be as a consequence of our realisation. In this sense it acts as a ‘protocol’ for practice within the specific background in question.

The State-of-mind, mood, is the way in which, through the primordial moods either evoked by authentic practices or closed by inauthenticity of our past we engage with the coming of the future. Heidegger chooses to illustrate the problematic extremes of mood but in our more everyday practice moods signal the relationship of practices with the background. The future is feared when we do not trust ourselves or others to secure our vulnerability or to manage the future through their own practices. The feeling of being comfortable in strange surroundings with those who have confidence in their own skills leads one to be reliant on these as the reassurance for the management of the possibilities of the future.

The third temporalisation, falling, is our awareness of being with others, being in their presence, trying to understand what is now. There is a temptation for us to leap out of the present to another ecstasis when the inauthentic activity of our being closes off the present from our concern. The final stage of disclosure is its articulation which is done in discourse.

Heidegger draws a sharp distinction between the practice of being with other in the realisation of one’s future possibilities and being alongside other. In the first futural possibilities, one concerns oneself with entities that are temporal and part of *Dasein*, they form the potential of our own being as *Dasein* and as such are valued as temporal entities. Inauthentically our concern is only for the present where others lose their ability to be with us and become for us. They are objectified and play no part in Dasein’s integrated temporality. A discourse for these temporal performances, made manifest in practices and skills against a background of being, could be trust. Thus the notion of trusting in oneself to become one’s own being, that is the becoming of *Dasein*.

This leads, I would argue, that disclosing consists of the temporalising in our readiness to act for the being we might want to be. Here Wrathall gives a useful example:

“My drawing a chart on the chalk-board this morning had conditions of satisfaction determined by my intention of, for instance, communicating a point to the people sitting in the room. But the action was not just a communicative action; it was part of my being a teacher, and affected by the students being students. Thus the action looked beyond the communicative intention towards a future, realization of an identity which is not itself the object of the intention I hold,” (2000:112).

We see that disclosure is a readiness to anticipate and act in an unknowable future in a way that reveals what our intentions to be are. Thus the decision to trust is grounded in our experience of being in the world as we want to be known. This is a vulnerable state if we reveal it and requires us to trust in the background practice not to exploit. Further, this intentional comportment is made possible through the practices that make up our world, practices which extend our temporal horizons or which constrain them. Trust<sup>109</sup> is thus revealed through disclosure, is temporal and is context-specific.

### 3. TRUSTING IN THE TRUTH OF WHAT IS, NOT WHAT APPEARS TO BE

In this sense *Dasein* is not indicative of the disclosure of the structures of reason and rationality; rather it is the ‘openness’ or ‘world’ in and through which an intricate nexus of meanings is disclosed in its truth (*aletheia*), only to hide again into concealment (*lethe*). In this light, the presencing of things as they disclose themselves or open their meaning to us, is the shining forth of *aletheia* at the origin of things in and as the disclosure of ‘world’. In this sense, *aletheia*, as the ground of ‘world’, is also the Being-there of the ‘world’ – unconcealed. *Aletheia* is the Being-in-the-world that is *Dasein*; it is the unconcealment (and concealment) of the existent itself as well as the emerging of what has been gathered and preserved by man. And man is the kind of being who finds himself in between what is unconcealed and what is concealed. Heidegger tells us that, “Man in his essence is ek-sistent (standing out) into the openness of Being, into the open region that lights the

<sup>109</sup>I have not evoked the notion of care for this is a special example of trust and not sufficient upon which to build the argument.

‘between’ within which a ‘relation’ of subject to object can be,” (2000:229). But man remains suspended within the dichotomy of the subject and object, living in and through this polarity yet unaware of its existence – thus he is not grounded. Man thinks that he opens reality for himself. He sees himself as an isolated subject, an independent ‘I’ apart from his existential-ontological dimension of Being-in-the-world, interdependent and interwoven with Being. Of course, man only reflects the oblivion of Being in the history of metaphysics.

If we are to let learn thinking we have to unlearn what metaphysical thinking has been. We must understand how the tradition of thinking has failed to ask the most fundamental question of Being. Metaphysical thinking has forgotten the question of Being in favour of beings. It has forgotten the essential belonging together of the two-fold of Being and beings. Even the critical philosophy of Descartes and Kant, “... thinks from beings back to beings, with a glance in passing toward Being,” (2000:211). According to Heidegger, thinking only about the essence of beings and never questioning the essence of their essence, the Being of their being (and the Being of Being), has left thinking about beings divorced from its ground and thus the history of thinking ungrounded and polarised into the subject-object dichotomy. Thus, man, “self-assuredly and stubbornly bypasses the mystery,” (1975:121). Notwithstanding, it is true that in the history of philosophy, and of thinking, we indeed witness the abandonment and forgetfulness of Being. However, as Heidegger’s admonishes, in modernity Being is in exile.

So it is of utmost importance for us moderns to comprehend the way man stands in his relation to Being, or even better ask: how does it stand with man and Being? What is the relation that bears between man and the Being of beings? To understand the question of Being essentially means to let learn the mystery of man through the mystery of Being. It entails remembering our primordial link to Being, and to let learn the gift of self Being itself sends. It means through genuine thinking to unveil the Being in beings. Man standing *in between* the two-fold of Being and beings, is able to let learn a thinking that enables him to uncover and unfold his essential nature from within the mystery of Being. Then and only then, the essential human is enabled to let nothing else be learned than – learning.

#### **4. SCIENTIFIC METHOD AS A WAY OF KNOWING**

Science in the way used by Heidegger is different from the common use made in English. As Cooper (2002:49) points out, care need to be taken with Heidegger’s use of *Wissenschaft* as science. For Heidegger applies

Wissenschaft to any disciplined search for knowledge – to history as much as to physics and science; it is better conceptualised not as science but as scientific method. This separated ‘the world’ from the existent, or the emergent, power of *physis*, and thus launched the whole metaphysical tradition upon the trajectory of representational thinking that bears the determination of truth as correspondence. Thinking became identified with reason (*ratio*), establishing and securing its dominance over the existent.

Heidegger points out that science always manipulates beings and always has a projection of Being. These variables of how we manipulate beings and how we project Being are governed, in the modern epoch, by the mathematical. We perceive and think about all entities within the scientific realm as quantifiable. No entity can be thought scientifically outside the realm of the mathematical; each object in natural science must be quantified in some manner in order to be thought of as scientific. Hence, the projection of Being as the mathematical (i.e., our response to how Being has grounded our particular historical period) determines how we are, in natural science, to think about and manipulate beings in our modern historical era.

Natural science views objects through their familiarity. However, science must manipulate things, via their distinctiveness, in order to investigate their particular properties, but when it comes to describing these properties it must do so by altering its view of the things themselves. In order for science to become reflective and to theorize about its objects, it must transform its view of its objects from distinctiveness to the familiarity of our background practices.

Theory, however, does not make possible the new viewing, but participates in the alteration of how we view the thing. The new viewing has purposely taken the object out of its normal environment in order to view what it is. For Heidegger, this thematized view is not the essence of any object in its relationship with us as we manipulate it, but the object out of that context; out of the context in which we operate with the object in our original relationship with it.

Science begins by making explicit certain aspects of beings. What can be readily seen in the demarcation and initial fixing of an area of subject matter are the basic concepts which remain our clues for disclosing this area and, “determine the way in which we get an understanding beforehand of the area of subject matter underlying all the objects a science takes as its theme and all positive investigation is guided by understanding,” (1962:30). Thus, any new student to a science begins slowly by learning the basic concepts of that science. One does not learn the ontological grounding of that science, that is, how the area of subject-matter was ontologically opened, but rather how the science operates within the area already opened.

After learning the science, however, one does proceed to the most essential problems; for Heidegger, science can never (and need not) go to the essential (ontological) questions. Heidegger points out that there is a large difference between ontological questions (e.g., the question of Being) and scientific questions, because scientific questions do not inquire into how such interpretations of beings came about, while the ontological questions are precisely concerned with these matters. Heidegger writes, "The question of Being aims therefore at ascertaining the *a priori* conditions not only for the possibility of the sciences which examine entities as entities of such and such a type, and, in so doing, already operate with an understanding of Being, but also for the possibility of those ontologies themselves which are prior to the ontical<sup>110</sup> sciences and which provide their foundations. Basically, all ontology, no matter how rich and firmly compacted a system of categories it has at its disposal, remains "blind and perverted from its own most aim, if it has not first adequately clarified the meaning of Being, and conceived this clarification as its fundamental task," (1962:31).

Heidegger is not attempting to belittle science; he maintains that the activities of science are quite important, but what he is trying to show is that science cannot ask certain types of questions. Natural science cannot ask questions about Being, i.e. ontological questions; it cannot ask how these beings that we are examining received the meaning they have; it cannot ask about how this particular realm of beings was opened up. The questioning within a particular science must remain about the beings it examines; it cannot ask about any ontological grounding of these beings, for these questions remain outside the scope of scientific practice. Each field of science is concerned only with the beings that separate its field from others. However, it is possible, as Rosenthal points out, to criticise Heidegger because he, "strongly reacts against the recurring understanding of an independent nature in terms of the reification of scientific contents, he never refers to nature in any attempt to characterize the broader being process. The independence of nature in this broadest sense, however, as foundational of all that is and all the ways of being, is applicable to being as well as beings, and is ultimately inextricably linked with the fundamental ontology as an uncovering of the existential structure of the human," (2000:74).

For Heidegger the sciences operate on the basis of a vast yet inexplicit set of *a priori* presumptions, a projection which first makes it possible to thematize the natural world as an entity for scientific knowledge. Philosophy<sup>111</sup> makes explicit the structure of the *a priori* and thus reveals

<sup>110</sup>Ontical inquiry is concerned primarily with entities and the facts about them.

<sup>111</sup> See Glazebrook (2000) for a full discussion of these points.

them for what they are, projections of being with no special status. For instance the mathematical projection of nature sees nature only in a mechanical fashion. The projection includes basic concepts, methods, and ways of looking, an experimental tradition and a language. A different projection would disclose a different world of projects. Heidegger claims that mathematics knowledge is regarded by Descartes as, "the one manner of apprehending entities which can always give assurance that their Being has been securely grasped," (1962:95). Further, the description of Being as a mathematical projection establishes it as an enduring entity and thus its reality, "that enduringly remains, really is," (1962:96).

The *a priori* of knowledge fixed by the mathematical projection reveals a world of certainty and fixed realities; it fails to see the need to reveal what entities are or might be. It fails to temporalise the temporal of being in the world. This tends towards creating a world of fixed certainty of which the temporal nature of Being and ultimately of Dasein is trapped in the presence of the mathematical projection of being-in-the-world. For sure the revisions of mathematical projection revealed by Einstein offer us the opportunity to look again at our notion of what knowledge of a dynamic world might be, but by describing the dynamic in a fixed form we can lose its essence. In this sense the realisation of reality revealed by quantum mechanics is illustrative of a failure of a form of mathematic projection to capture the world, which cannot be captured as its ontological primordial reality, through the projection of science.

More simply put, if science is a projection of reality based on *a priori* assumptions that are atemporal universals yet our Being is temporal then our scientific projections of themselves ought to be grounded in a temporal discourse. However, they are not, for they are based on the *a priori* assumptions. To free science from the *a priori* we must temporalise our projective search for knowledge. In doing so the certainty of the *a priori* is replaced by the trust of the temporality of being in the world. This threatens our notion of a knowable world in which we act if we retain the Cartesian notion of acting upon, rather than being, the world. If we forego the need for certainty in the sense of knowable and accept the notion of knowingly acting whilst being-in-the world we have a real chance of revealing our potentialities to be an ongoing project unto death.

Heidegger embraces an epistemology which focuses on the meaning of the fullness and richness of everyday life. Indeed, his perceived lack of a grounding in traditional scientific method is the basis of his rejection of



forms of reductionism as this implies.<sup>112</sup> Heidegger's notion does not allow for a notion of *a priori* knowledge to have meaning, for, as has been mentioned previously, if the distinction between *quid juris* and *quid facti* is dissolved then the demarcation between *a priori* and *a posteriori* also seems to fail. For Heidegger our knowledge of what is an entity is in itself nothing other than our grasp of its actual place in a context. Our understanding of what it is, determined by our actual encounter with it, is based on the way in which the world is revealed to us through engagement as a temporal being. What we are able to understand *a priori* is constrained to the extent that our temporal horizons reflect our intention to act as meaningful agents. In this sense, and Heidegger develops a notion of schemata to construct this future orientation (where *praxis* stabilises the chaos of the future, Heidegger, 1991: 84-89)<sup>113</sup> and *a priori* knowledge is outside of the temporal setting of our future which allows us to reveal what is not known. The schemata form the temporal horizons of the encounter and the products of the imagination rooted in primordial time. This time is the basis of our finite knowledge and existence and is the source of the categories and the *a priori* as products of this grounding in finitude. Rosenthal encapsulates the position well when she writes that, "The temporal stretch of human experience as creative, regulative, and anticipatory reaches out to the future to let it emerge within the contours of the possibilities contained in the temporally rooted structure of meaning," (2000:80).

Heidegger concludes that the *a priori* structures the being of entities, the way beings are in our encounter with them through purposeful encounter with them. The *a priori* is thus prior not because it is prior to our experience but because possibilities making opportunities of which they are a type occur prior to the possibilities being taken.

## 5. SCIENCE AND THE FUNDAMENTAL ONTOLOGY

Heidegger sees scientific enquiry as less significant in our understanding of being that is commonly accepted. His claim that fundamental ontology is prior to – and perhaps superior to – is offered early in *Being and Time*: "Ontological inquiry is indeed more primordial, as against the ontical inquiry of the positive science. But it remains itself naive and opaque if in

<sup>112</sup> See Heidegger's 'The Age of the World Picture', in *The Question Concerning Technology and other Essays* (1977).

<sup>113</sup> "*Praxis* is in itself, as the securing of stability, a need for schemata," Heidegger (1991:86).

its researches into the Being of entities it fails to discuss the meaning of Being in general,” (1962:31).

Guignon considers that Heidegger claims the prior status of ontology to science, as, “the sciences cannot grasp their own essence as modes of human activity because they cannot comprehend the theoretical frameworks in which they operate. Secondly, the sciences are governed by a ‘nonappearing content’ which is their essential subject matter but which they cannot fully deal with: thus something may be concealed by the sciences without their ever being able to determine whether or not this is so. And, thirdly, man is ‘uprooted’ and ‘homeless’ in science,” (1983:184). In this way science leads us to conceive of ourselves as thrown into a world rather than being in the world.

The partition of *a priori* from the *a posteriori* authority of scientific knowledge is the distinctive mark of scientific knowing and distinguishes it from other types of knowing by the examination of beings precisely in order that they may be revealed. For Heidegger, science is presenting revelations of the being. Scientific investigation is completely free from the aim of *using* the being. Instead, it tries to reveal the being for its own sake, that is, to *let* the being *be* what it is in itself. However, science does not reveal the being as itself through a purely passive process of observation. The being is always interpreted on the basis of concepts and principles that originate with the observer. Thus scientific investigation is essentially *projective*.

The investigation of nature only became scientific when scientists examined nature in the light of their own projections of it. For Heidegger the revealing of our being is through the entities which make up our being-in the world. One of the functions of scientific research is, “the demarcation and initial fixing of these areas of subject matter,” (1962:29). Scientific enquiry as a mode of revealing is subject to criticism both in its maturity to reflect meaningfully on its fields or domain, caused by its positivistic approach, and its inability to go beyond the Cartesian notion of subject. Heidegger sees a tendency for these scientific domains to review their foundations. Listing mathematics, physics, biology, humanities and theology he comments on a fundamental need to refocus the scope of their activities through the temporalising of the entities they research

Modern science owes its progress to this reversion to our own projections of nature. These projections are not merely arbitrary or accidental, but rather serve as the conditions of knowing the beings at all. We thus have an initial understanding of beings that we project on to them as a basis for understanding them. This discovery about the basis for ordinary experience,

and hence of modern science, provides a central clue as to the nature of metaphysics.<sup>114</sup>

## 6. A MORE PRIMORDIAL THINKING – *ORIGINARY THINKING*

Heidegger does not seek to degrade reason (*ratio*) but to relegate it to its sphere of activity, or give it its rightful place, within the whole of Being (1968:226). Especially today, *ratio* has replaced our direct link to the existent as such. But there is, Heidegger tells us, a thinking that is not calculative or representational; rather it encounters presence that unconceals itself only when *opening* or unconcealment is dominant. It is in and through this ‘opening’ that the essence of man is to be thought and ‘established’. The nature of opening as such is presence.

Heidegger’s contention is that in spite all their knowledge science, philosophy, and the other humanistic sciences that work within the modalities of representational thinking cannot uncover the nature of thinking as presence or as presence of an absence. Thinking that undertakes this task of the matter of thinking, to think into the self-concealing of unconcealment (*a-letheia*), Heidegger calls originary recollective or meditative thinking. In different contexts of his later works, he calls it foundational thinking, essential thinking, commemorative thinking, or non-metaphysical thinking. For the most part, in the ensuing discussion we will refer to this kind of thinking as originary thinking. From within the ‘experience’ of non-metaphysical thinking at the end of philosophy, originary thinking ‘establishes’ ‘another beginning’ in the history of Being by engaging the foundations of Being itself (nonconceptually) and its fountain of truth; it commemorates man in and through the origins of history. Originary thinking reflects into the nature of *aletheia* as *a-letheia*.

Through originary, recollective thinking, Heidegger discovers a way that abandons traditional or metaphysical thinking. Originary thinking is Heidegger’s way to move beyond the subjective or pervasive structures of experience in *Being and Time* where the existential structures of man (*Dasein*) constitute the horizons of human awareness and thus present obstacles to the apprehension of Being *in se*. Heidegger through originary thinking is searching for the horizon of horizon, insofar as horizon means a

<sup>114</sup> Here we might identify a link with Newman who proposed that all knowledge is linked – not, however, by being in the world but by being acts and the work of the Creator (1996:77).

field of awareness whereby objects of thought or representation manifest. Within a horizon we have the formation of representational ideas that conceptually grasp the objects of thought from the flow of time. For Heidegger transcendence means the standing beyond yet within openness or unconcealment, that essentially surrounds and opens up all horizons of awareness. He thinks openness as such (or unconcealment) as the complete transcendence of ‘horizons’ (1966:63ff.).<sup>115</sup> As such, ‘transcendence’ is the regioning of the region, or “... an enchanted region where everything belonging there returns to that in which it rests,” (1966:65). And again: “[T]hat-which-regions is an abiding expanse which, gathering all, opens itself, so that in it openness is halted and held, letting everything merge in its own resting,” (1966:66). In other words, self-presenting man (regioning) held *in between* the two-fold of Being and beings, lets the presence of present beings to come or rest in its essential nature within presencing-itself, or Being as such.

This way, man presencing, that is resting in and as his essential nature, *is* apprehending (*noein*) the self-concealing nature of unconcealment as such, letting rest in openness the essential nature of present beings, abiding with them. As such, the essential human opens up to the time of Being and as openness participates within the origins of its history. Anderson in his introduction to *Discourse on Thinking*, speaks of Heidegger’s method of originary or meditative thinking: “What seems to be necessary in order to comprehend Being is a method of understanding which can grasp man’s nature as temporal in terms of its ground, rather than simply in terms of the horizons of experience. Such a method could reveal man’s temporality in relation to what was beyond man, and not merely in the terms of man himself,” (1966:17).

Of course, we are thinking when we write an e-mail; however, the question is what kind of thinking is this? Is it representational or is it presencing within the unthought, in and as the whole self concealing. Originary thinking does not mean to stop thinking. It is simply another more original way of thinking, that is why it is “another beginning”.

The following is taken from a personal correspondence with a scholarly colleague of mine, Pavlos Michaelides on the very topic raised above. I include it here, with his permission, as an insightful piece and one that contributed to my – and I hope your – understanding and thinking.

<sup>115</sup> This quote comes from ‘Conversation on a Country Path about Thinking (in Heidegger 1966 *Discourse on Thinking*) and although of value in itself the choice of characters for this conversation and their role illustrate Heidegger’s relationship with the forms of knowledge that define scholars and scientists which he then contrasts with the insights of the letting learn teacher. See Chapter 9 for a longer discussion.

“I can be thinking about the sun every morning but in my thinking not to be abiding with the sun. In looking at the sun I may say Oh! there is the sun, how beautiful are the morning orange-rosy hues. But if I take a look within my experience I merely recognised the sun and the morning colours as representational objects that I know exactly what they mean because I have recognised them a thousand times before. However, if I am in-dwelling within the sun I experience it differently every time I gaze upon it because I am experiencing the thingness of the thing. Within unconcealment I experience the Sun differently every time; it is always new.....unthought, unexpected, and so on.”

Originary thinking is thinking from within the origins of what is called thinking, that is, from within the origins of that which calls me into thinking, and also directs, steers my thinking. It is still thinking with the only difference that each time it is new because it takes place within the pure sphere of a circle, within openness as such. It is thinking from within an infinite openness that is a free and open expanse and it thinks from the within of the silent calling of language, within Being as such. This way, originary thinking brings forth the mystery of language and the power of its emerging word. The words spoken through originary thinking are infinite signs always pointing toward the infinite. To the degree that one is enabled by Being, to that degree and only, they can listen to these words and pay heed to the sphere to which they belong and which brought them forth in the first place. Someone’s language can lead us to an experience of unconcealment, or even anyone’s language can do that if we have the ears to listen to the unsaid in what is said. But the experiences of unconcealment are easier to reveal the mysterious ground from which they arise when they are revealed in literature, science, art, philosophy, etc. from one who in knowingness is experiencing Being as a whole – or experienced Being as such even once, many times, recurrently.

Finally, for Heidegger most of human living is taking place inauthentically because we humans are given to fleeing and escaping. This escaping, in the infinite ways in which we do it, is a form of transcendence of everydayness and mundane, routine life. But there is merit in all experiences because Being as a whole is presencing everywhere and in every thing. Thus, the saving power of Being is everywhere although it is experienced only in unconcealment. Henceforth, all these experiences are necessary because I suppose one fine morning we may awaken beyond these forces of necessity, structure, pattern, habit, to *aletheia*. All these experiences, inauthentic as they may be, are chances if you like, that beckon us in their own way (each time differently) to wake up. Genuine experience happens only when we choose authentic life, and choosing involves doing so

again and again. Freire offers a clear conclusion of what I mean here, “the process of transforming the world, which reveals this presence of man, can lead to his humanization as well as his dehumanization, to his growth or diminution,” (1998:55).

Central then to Heidegger (and shared by Freire) is a misrepresentation of being in the world by creating the world as a reality of symbols, rules and theoretical proposition. Being in the world, as the world of practice (see Dreyfus<sup>116</sup>) is the basis for the evaluation of the background of our being which needs no redress to the *a priori* to establish a stable notion of meaning. Foucault’s insights are driven by his notion of “positivity of discourses” which, unlike *a priori* knowledge, are not static, unified notions of what is but are changing ongoing collections of what is known leading to a contextual disclosure of our current understanding. Their role is, “what we might call a historical *a priori*,” (1994:127). Foucault draws a distinction from the traditional notion of *a priori* as a condition of a validity for judgments; rather, it is a condition of reality of statements. This shift in use both liberates the *a priori* from its universality and changes its existence from one ungrounded in being to one revealed through practice in-the-world, of the world, and as the world. Its worldliness is thus revealed through its historical context, through its temporality. Foucault expresses it best as:

“Moreover, this *a priori* does not elude historicity: it does not constitute, [above events] and is an unmoving heaven, an atemporal structure: it is defined as the group of rules that characterize a discursive practice: but these rules are not imposed from outside on the elements that relate together; they are caught up in the very things that they connect; and if they are not modified with the least of them, they modify them, and are transformed with them into certain decisive thresholds. The *a priori* of positivities is not only the system of temporal dispersion; it is itself a transformable group,” (1994:127).

The insight that Foucault offers is a more contemporary argument than Heidegger’s in that the primacy of scientific enquiry is based on an understanding of human nature and attempts to reveal; this through quasi-empirical methods such as those adapted by Comte reveals nothing more than the form of the investigation. To illustrate this, Foucault offers an ontological construction of science in term of *mathesis* and *taxinoma*. This

<sup>116</sup> “Thus all of our knowledge even our attempts to know background is always shaped by what might be called our implicit ontology, an ontology which is in our practices a way of behaving towards things and people, not in our minds as background assumptions which happen to be taken for granted,” Dreyfus (1980).

view of the *a priori* shapes Foucault's as it did Heidegger's view of what science might be and the reliance we can put on it; how we can trust it. He sees the externalizing of knowledge outside of chronology as a method of reinstating the fixedness, a confidence in the certainty of the representativeness of the *taxinoma* and the *mathesis* in a general grammar of our everyday discourse.

Although not directly mentioned, Foucault's view is that empirical knowledge, "already presupposes the use of a certain critique – a critique that is not the exercise of pure reflection but the result of a series of more or less obscure divisions," (2002:348). The division includes imperfect from stable knowledge, illusion from truth, ideology fantasy from scientific. These divisions are revealed through a discourse that is neither a reduction as in positivism or a promise, "a discourse whose tension would keep separate the empirical and the transcendental, while being directed at both," (2002:349).

There is clearly here an issue of trusting in what science reveals to us about our being. This notion of trust embodied in the findings of science confirms our distinction from the world in which we act upon rather as being the world of our actions. This notion of trust is at the core of our understanding of a knowable world. Its importance to the development of an experiential understanding of knowledge and the community of higher education is hard to overstate. But how does Heidegger overcome the constraints of science to explore the nature of being?

A temporality of knowledge, articulated as the flow of meaning, is to conceive of knowledge as having a meaning which is in flux which is realizable through the context in which it is located in time and space. Knowing cannot be disassociated from meaning (or better 'interpretation'). Given that meaning is always contextual (see Wittgenstein and social constructivists) then knowing is temporal because the context always changes.

If I 'know' something it means that it has gone through my personal filters and interpretations and I made a meaning out of an event. It is thus past knowing embedded into the schemata of what I know. However, this notion of the *a priori* is prior, it is the reality before entry into the horizons of purposeful activity and thus assumes a linearity of time that Heidegger and others do not accept. The future viewed as, "[K]airos is incalculable – in the sense unforeseeable – and that we must always be prepared to deal with the new. This incalculable time is the time of *praxis*," (Murchadha, 1998:263). Thus the contextualisation of my past knowing is reflected upon in the present. Therefore, we might make a statement that is called 'knowing' which is a present meaning for the past that is known. There is not an absolutely 'objective' knowing. Knowing means essentially 'personal

knowing' and personal knowing is the meaning of my interpretation of what I know. For instance, consider tacit knowing. The distinction between tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge has sometimes been expressed in terms of knowing-how and knowing-that, respectively (Ryle, 1984), or in terms of a corresponding distinction between embodied knowledge and theoretical knowledge.<sup>117</sup>

As Rosenthal concludes, "not because we recognise it earlier, or because it is formed prior to our contact with the sensible, but because possibilities in their possibility-making function have the character of the earlier in relation to that which they make possible in our worldly encounter, (2000:83).<sup>118</sup>

On this account knowing-how or embodied knowledge is characteristic of the expert, who acts, makes judgments, and so forth without explicitly reflecting on the principles or rules involved. The expert works without having a theory of his or her work; he or she just performs skilfully without deliberation or focused attention. Knowing-that, by contrast, involves consciously accessible knowledge that can be articulated and is characteristic of the person learning a skill through explicit instruction, recitation of rules, attention to his or her movements, etc. While such declarative knowledge may be needed for the acquisition of skills, the argument goes, it no longer becomes necessary for the practice of those skills once the novice becomes an expert in exercising them, and indeed it does seem to be the case that, as Polanyi argued, when we acquire a skill, we acquire a corresponding understanding that defies articulation (Polanyi, 1974).

The present is an environment of meaning and the future of speculation. It is because what we mean by knowing is known that we can test it, seek its justification, coherence, plausibility and fallibility. It is also why, if we fail to temporize knowing, it is susceptible to scepticism and to delusion.

The notion that knowledge is fixed separately from the engagement of the subject and object of the knowledge in some Cartesian subject sense is difficult to maintain given the temporality of the creator and user of that knowledge. However, a more accurate epistemological foundation can be built on the realization that all knowledge is, in its lived, existential sense, subjective. That is, it exists in the lived experience of individual human beings. This position can be traced at least from Plato through Vico, Kant, Heidegger, and the social constructionism of Habermas.

<sup>117</sup> Lum (2003) questions our assumptive use of this distinction as evidence of different knowledge rather than representation of aspects of knowledge.

<sup>118</sup> See *History of The Concept of Time* (1978) particularly pages 324-25.



It follows that the epistemology of conscious knowledge is defined temporally and therefore as soon as we think we know who we are or what is knowable to us, we cease to know who we are because what we know is past knowledge of who we were. This sceptical argument is driven, according to Heideggerian reasoning, by the priority given to epistemology over ontology.<sup>119</sup> The claim that I am making is that to engage in knowing is to recognise the temporality of what is known. Its importance to the main thrust of the trusting of higher education is both in the temporal nature of trust and in what is the temporality of a university if it engages creatively in the revelation of our world's future as revealed momentarily in the present of our temporal world. For if this argument is compelling it warns us that if we allow our institutions to develop a prescient of information transmission we become alienated from what our future might unexpectedly be in some deterministic causal and potentially nihilistic way. The university that is proposed here has a temporality manifest in its existence, its purpose and its way of being.

## 7. HEIDEGGER'S WAY FORWARD

Heidegger's method of interpretation consists of an investigation of the 'fore-structure' of reality. He presents this method in detail in *Being and Time* (1962). The important elements are summarised below as a three-level procedure:

1. All interpretation must start with a fore-having – a taken-for-granted background: "In every case interpretation is grounded in something we have in advance – in a fore-having. As the appropriation of understanding, the interpretation operates in an involvement whole which is already understood," (1962:191). The background already circumscribes the domain in question and thus already determines possible ways of questioning.
2. There needs to be some sense of how to approach the problem, some perspective from which to undertake the interpretation: "A point of view, which fixes that with regard to which what is understood is to be interpreted. In every case interpretation is grounded in something we see in advance – in a fore-sight," (1962:191).
3. The investigator already has expectations as to what he will find out: "The interpretation has already decided for a definite way of conceiving

<sup>119</sup> This argument is made in his critique in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* (1990).

(the entity to be interpreted) either with finality or with reservations; it is grounded in something we grasp in advance – in a fore-conception,” (1962:191).

These basic elements of phenomenological investigation formed the foundations of the qualitative research methodology used here and for Heidegger (1992:3), “Genuine progress in the sciences occurs in this field of reflection.”

This theoretical method (*fore-structure*) is not orthogonal to logical empiricism but focuses on the understanding not the explanation of everyday life. Dreyfus (1992:203) argues this as, “the difference between fore-structure of interpretation (understanding) and the fore-structure of scientific theory (explanation).”. He further develops this argument thus; “in human science an interpreter, if he is to understand what is going on, must share the general human background understanding of the person or group being studied. Everyday objectivity disappears as soon as the meaning of the situation is bracketed out in a mistaken attempt to obtain the sort of objectivity appropriate to natural sciences,” (1962:204). As Heidegger states, “theoretical behaviour is just looking, without circumspection, but that this looking is non-circumspective does not mean that it follows no rules: it constructs a canon for itself in the form of method,” (1962:99).

## 8. EDUCATIONAL POSSIBILITIES

Heidegger’s arguments presented here form a way of looking at the status of our knowledge and reveal it, I believe, as being constrained in its truth by the meaning that it gains through the form of its revelation. This inauthentic knowing represented through a meaning reified by science anchors our being in the presence of the known. The flux of temporality essential to our understanding of Dasein is problematised not revealed by redress to *a priori* statements. The claim of universal *a priori* understanding of being harms our search for understanding. In its place we need to find a way of understanding the world which remains uncertain in the uncertainty of that understanding. Forms of understanding that reveal anything other than that are closing off the potentials of being.

To find this form of understanding and to attribute to it a meaning that has worth cannot be constrained to the temporal of the present. *A priori* statements attempt to do this for they seek to locate, categorise and control the imaginative interpretation which humanity can form of how what is might be. Knowledge which forecloses the future damages the potential of being and higher education ought not to institutionalise such a closure.

Higher education ought to be futural, but not the futural of the foreclosed known as is implied in the provision of say, professional examinations for an accredited form of being, but for the unknown. Here skills and practices of *praxis* direct endeavour.

Higher education's role is to extend the temporal horizons for, as Bergmann states, "Each individual is thus part of numerous temporal orders, some self-determined, some imposed, some posing linear structures, such as biography and career or the surrounding world order, and some having cyclical structures such as 'daily rounds'" (1992:107). A linear time horizon seems only to be part of a complex array of time realities that comprise the temporal consciousness which uses it to express the way in which knowledge is assimilated and used in society. Temporal understanding involves understanding of meaning in terms of the consequences of that knowledge on its ethical, social, economic, political and ecological environments.

The risk of engaging the future requires skills which higher education can offer. The process through which the content of a subject's future time has an impact on present behaviour is to be identified with the motivational process by which goals and means-end structures regulate behaviour. The impact of more or less distant goal objects is accounted for in terms of motivational processes, which cannot be replaced by other cognitive processes such as expectancy or anticipation of future outcomes. As Gjesme (1981) has shown the impact of goals decreases as a function of their distance in time. That is goal objects in the future motivate us but the further they are away the less they force themselves into our actions. The longer the time perspective we have the more goal objects are actionable. However, if very distant goals are to be achieved then a way will be needed to bring them into the action future of the individual's present. This is likely to mean the forgoing of immediate benefit from one set of actions for deferred benefit from another. The predisposition to defer immediate reward for actions undertaken now for benefits in the future is the basis in our society of a social skills and segregation.

However, in the uncertainty of the future beyond everyday time horizons, anticipated outcomes are more difficult to predict. They are less distinct, risks associated with them are higher, involvement levels vary and, consequently, decision-making is more ambiguous, less comfortable and rational. Beyond everyday horizons, the dependency on linear time, both embedded in products and experienced by individuals, is more unreliable. The dependence upon the restricted temporal domain of the everyday time horizon is best highlighted by looking at those acts, which require personal planning beyond the safety of the everyday horizon.

Educationally, then, existential trust is heavy with possibilities. It argues that we need to prepare our selves for a future which is uncertain and which makes us vulnerable. The more distant the future the more we need to trust both in ourselves and in others. Such trust in what it means to be us and in what the meaning of the future might be is rewired through the opening of understanding based on the temporalised *a priori*. This temporalising of the yet to be experienced as possibility revealed through our risk to understanding of our present self is at the heart of the existential notion of learning. It requires a wisdom based both on the past as emotion and the future as *logos* but based in the present of not closing off possibilities for our future.

To understand how we might enjoy and flourish within these possibilities guidance is often required. Guidance in this sense is provided by many who might claim the title teacher. In the following chapter the teacher I refer to is not one's mother, mentor, guru or God; it is the academic teacher nurtured by, and nurturing, the university yet to be fully known.

## Chapter 9

# TRUSTING IN TEACHING TO LET LEARN

*“The teacher is ahead of his apprentices in this alone (the procurement of useful information) that he has still far more to learn than they – he has to learn to let them learn,”*<sup>120</sup> Heidegger (1968:15) (brackets added).

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Heidegger’s assertion that opens the chapter is a fundamental and uniting principle of this paper. At its core is a *praxis* based on the revelation of the active relationship between subject, teacher and student, it is what Gadotti (1996) calls a ‘pedagogy of *praxis*’ albeit revealed in conflict and which Freire has championed in his influential writing on education in general (for example, Freire, 1993, 2000) and higher education in particular (in Escobar, 1994). The existential *praxis* is the way we deconstruct normative modes of thought in regards to the process of teaching. In this sense, we abandon the traditional understanding of teaching where the teacher has the knowledge of the subject. In addition, the existential *praxis* positions education as addressing the dialectic tensions between teaching and being taught in an integrative manner which reunites the individual with others.

It is of little surprise that in the ‘Conversation’ (1966:58-90) that the three characters who discourse thinking are symbolic of the representational thinking of the ungrounded-ness of science, the interpretive yet inauthentic

<sup>120</sup> He continues, insightfully, “that nobody wants any longer to become a teacher today, when all things are downgraded and graded from below (for instance, from business),” (1968:15).

scholar as learner and the teacher whose insight, clarification and direction evidence the *releasement*, of openness advocated by Heidegger. It is also in a mechanism such as the conversation that the spoken and the unspoken word reveal clearly what Heidegger means by letting learning. The role of the teacher is fully illustrated in the closing lines of the conversation where all three participants formulate in openness by taking on, as if one, the final lines of the conversation in harmony. The teacher has successfully denounced in himself any fixed role and enables his conversationists to do the same thing. In openness they all let learn the meaning of thinking.

One of the most liberating freedoms of this *praxis* is the engagement and collaboration *with* others rather than *for* others. This is manifested in education not through structured instruction controlled by the academic but in a joint exploration of truth through engaging in the search for knowledge and understanding. This *praxis* of higher education conceives of students as partners in the exploration of knowledge, pushing at the boundaries of what is knowable. It is not prescriptive of the form that the search takes and accepts many correct interpretations of the meaning of scholarly experience but, above all, it is involving and committed. This *praxis* offers choice and the associated responsibility that goes with making these personal judgements for action. It is worthy educational practice in that it encourages practical judgements on the form and content of the curriculum, which, Smith has argued, have a, “significant and irreducibly ethical dimension,” (1999: 423).

Drawing from the existential literature and the contribution made by Heidegger in particular, I want to point to a learning community where the community practises the scholastic processes of conversation, involvement and engagement as modes of revealing knowledge. These allow teachers and scholars to engage as interactive partners, collaborating in an educational project as critical thinkers and as mutual learners. For the authentic student, we argue, the practice of learning is as important as the acquisition of the practical skills of scholarship. For this to happen, we conclude, requires a dialectical reflection on behalf of the universities as well as action, it requires teachers to provide guidance to new scholars as they create their own learning experiences and it requires a form of trust where, “dialogue is grounded in the respect of persons,” (Willems et al., 1995:10). Certainly this does not necessarily require an existential interpretation, but an existentialist discourse has benefits in formulating a way of understanding the process of the fusion of subject and object essential to this approach.

The concept is of an existential *praxis* as an alternative to teacher-controlled instruction in higher education. I want to argue that a *praxis* can

be implemented as a learning community and it constitutes an important alternative to specifically designed instructional systems in higher education.

## 2. A *PRAXIS* OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Our proposition is built on a notion of existential trust (Gibbs, 1998) which is the antithesis of the instrumental narrative where distrust totalised the university and restricts personal horizons to what is known about the knowable, measurable and economically valuable and leaves little room to engage students creatively in the exploration of knowing, for what reason is there to know, explore and invent that which will not secure a job?

To distrust, I suggest, is to favour hegemony and passivity, leading to egocentric manipulation and exploitation. At its worst it misuses other scholars (e.g. research students) as objects for the satisfaction of another academic's career. A discourse of distrust anchors the university in the safety of the present, restricting personal horizons to what is known about the knowable, and leaving little room to creatively engage students in the exploration of knowing.

I want to explore a scholarship which offers a willingness to risk prejudice and tradition in the search for a future whose relationship with the present and the past is unknown. It needs respectful individuals who trust each other as one in humanity to make it work. I accept, in taking this stand, that I define the goals of higher education pedagogy in terms familiar to Buber (1954) and Freire (in Escobar, 1994), although not as well articulated as Curzon-Hobson (2002).

An existential *praxis* cannot just be a search for one or even many forms of external knowledge: it is a personal as well as a moral endeavour. This is a significant point in the connectedness of self and others, and one on which Heidegger's interpretation of every-day-ness and his revelation of what one's possibilities might be is helpful for the notion of higher education. The unrealised potential of our taken-for-granted-world is its 'standing reserve' and, in the sense meant by Heidegger (1977), is the underlying genuine authenticity revealed through actions and use; it is its potentiality, hidden, latent and waiting to be revealed by being-in-the-world. In regards to understanding human action it offers a mode of understanding of an individual's comportment in his world which transcends any one mode of revealing.

This offers a challenge to any accepted single notion of education and the seeking of a truth, an understanding and a flourishing. To achieve this requires a community of engagement rather than being presented for passive acceptance which in its turn risks a delusion of education. This encourages

ways of seeing things and gives them personal value rather than measuring their worth by the aggregated opinion of current, significant opinion formers. Heidegger asks us to dig deeper, not to always accept the authority of others but to involve ourselves in experiences in order to know.

This requires courage, for it is not undertaken in seclusion from the world but within it, facing the reality created by our roles and myths. It is a *praxis* where self-interest cannot be separated from the interest of humanity at large. It embraces all those who are able to develop and reveal their potentiality through the experience of higher education as a lifelong activity.

### 3. BUILDING LEARNING COMMUNITIES

Institutions, and higher education institutions in particular, Wenger (1998) claims, “to the extent that they address issues of learning explicitly, are largely based on the assumption that learning is an individual process, that it has a beginning and an end, that it is best separated from the rest of our activities, and that it is the result of teaching,” (1998:3). I would go further than this and try to place learning in higher education in the context of a learning community. Trying to make our recommendation concrete I present here what a Heideggerian/dialogic form of teaching might look like.

The existential *praxis* has the power to contribute to the creation of a learning community. A learning community has the capacity to promote and sustain the learning of all involved in a higher education community (Huffman and Hipp, 2003). The learning community that emerges through the existential *praxis* is democratic and person-centred rather than mechanical. It is also life-centred rather than driven exclusively by economic forces. Miller (2000) argues that community-learning centres could replace education institutions as the primary educational agency in a truly democratic, collaborative, sustainable society. More specifically, Miller believes that diverse expressions of open-ended, evolving, community-based education would replace fixed and hierarchical education systems. Further, Miller concludes,

“Places of learning would not be held hostage to narrow indicators of ‘accountability’ such as grades, test scores, or graduation rates; learning would not be constrained by textbooks and curricula established by anonymous bureaucrats; teaching would not be made narrow and petty in the service of ‘standards’ that elite commissions impose on all learners of all persuasions in all communities,” (2000:3).

This idea can be an alternative to traditional instruction. Rather than having the instruction controlled by a teacher, learners (teachers and students



without distinct roles) might ‘self-organize’ into learning communities with a general goal of supporting each other in their learning. That is to say, the function of guidance and control becomes distributed among group participants. Specific roles of group members are not assigned but rather emerge from the interaction of the whole.

From the existentialist perspective this requires action not reaction; it requires engagement<sup>121</sup> not observation; it requires that scholars are just that, not inauthentically role-playing for some alternative motive such as selling away the future for a lucrative personal contract or patent.

This is complicated by the form of teaching encouraged; that is, representational and rational, and the nature of the concealment by the pedagogical instrument: the teacher.

“In a system of higher education in the thrall of theory, we find pedagogy confined within the coordinates set by certain fundamental distinctions, among them the distinction between teacher and student, head and hand, knowledge and opinion, disinterest and interest earnest and game, and liberal and the vocational. Through these and other derivative distinctions, the set of priorities definitive of the life of the mind are affirmed, while the values associated with the more concrete and interval modes of human expression are denied,” (Heidegger in Allen and Axiotis, 2002:39-40).

This leads Heidegger to claim that if, “teaching is even more difficult than learning,” this is only because the teacher must be an exemplary learner capable of teaching his or her students to learn; that is, capable of learning-in-public, actively responding to the emerging demands of each unique educational situation.

Through this analysis we are led to understand that university teaching which becomes technicised into disciplines loses its universality. The need to reclaim this is directly opposed to the diversity models promoted by many western governments. It is certainly at the core of the future of higher education where the label of ‘university’ seems to be stretched beyond the barriers of meaning.

The issue of the cave is interesting for more than Heidegger’s of essence or the essencing of truth. Given that Plato argues that the emergence of the prisoner evidentially leads to his enlightenment and clarity of vision, what happens when this absolutely truth-based wisdom is problematicised? The

<sup>121</sup> Engagement is conceptualised in a Freirean sense where students involve, “their very beings and human conditions in the meaning-making of academic subjects,” (Bahruth and Steiner, 2000:120). It is an engagement that is counter-hegemonic.

issue now seems to be not one of importance in the sense of what is truth but one of why morality holds sway over other, lesser truth. Surely the argument falters and leaves the certainty of knowledge of what is the good life susceptible.

Heidegger places considerable accountability on the inauthenticity of teaching where it is not dedicated to letting thinking be thought, to the extent that:

“Implicit in all this, of course, is that the representation of the teacher is borrowed from *techne* and its relations of production. It is precisely this reduction of education to the instrumental, by analogy with *techne*, that is the source of everything awry with the university today,” (Heidegger in Allen and Axiotis, 2002:35).

“Likewise, in the university where logic and argument prevail, the pedagogical relation between teacher and the student is understood in homologous terms as a practical instance of the more general relation of subject to object. The teacher gives *eidos*, form and finality, to the student as spiritual material presented for shaping and forming *kata ton logon*, in accordance with an abstract model,” (Heidegger in Allen and Axiotis, 2002:34).

Heidegger’s observation on mass teaching is illustrative of his view of education. In mass higher education there is some form of assumptive equality before the teacher, within the collective of students where he teachers’ role in the pedagogic exchange is to seek some general equivalencies and to administered to such generalised equivalencies. By placing a transaction at the core of pedagogy he illustrates the power dynamic of the teacher as the authoritative repository and dispenser of knowledge and wisdom inevitability averts desire. This is problematic for a system of learning that lets learn.

“To break the tradition entails surpassing the subject/object distinction in all its domains, including action. The task is not to decide which kind of intentionality, practical or theoretical is prior, but to get beyond the terms altogether. Displacing the priority of *theoria* is not achieved by simply inverting its relation with *praxis*. The traditional account of both these ways of relating, knowing and doing, contemplation and action, the head and the hand, presupposes a more fundamental sort of intentionality,” (Heidegger in Allen and Axiotis, 2002:42).

He acknowledges that the practice of the teacher educator, when accomplished successfully, is always difficult and concludes:

“Teaching is even more difficult than learning. We know that; but we rarely think about it. And why is teaching more difficult than learning? Not because the teacher must have a larger store of information, and have it always ready. Teaching is more difficult than learning because what teaching calls for this: to let learn,” (Heidegger, 1986:15).

Continuing in the Heideggerian vein Thomson asks, “What is Called Teaching?” and he argues that teaching is to show or point out but then wonders what is within the concept of teaching that makes it an identifiable concept which is discipline-independent. Indeed it is this commonality as defined by Heidegger in excellent teachers as ‘letting learn’ that unifies a university particularly as the hyper-specialisation continues to fragment the ideal of what a university might be.

Teaching is of course, at one level, perhaps, at the level of instruction the sharing by the student of what a teacher’s words reveal but it is more than this, for this is not learning in the sense of an understanding but a way of enabling students to respond appropriately to the solicitations of the ontological environment. As Thomson states, “learning culminates in teaching then, because teaching is the highest form of *learning*: unlike ‘instructing’ [*belehren*] teaching [*lehren*] is ultimately a letting learn [*lernen lassen*],” (2002:140, brackets and italics in the original). In this sense teaching is a ‘giving’ a giving of the thinking and as such, according to Heidegger, the giving of Being. Thus teaching as the reunification of teaching and research is achieved, for students are being taught to think about thinking, to think and gain insights into essence; they are being taught to disclose the ontological presuppositions which underlie all research.

Heidegger says:

“The real teacher ... His conduct ... often produces the impression that we properly learn nothing from him, if by learning we now suddenly understand the procurement of useful information. The teacher is ahead of his apprentices in this alone, that he has still far more to learn than they – he has to learn to let them learn. The teacher must be capable of being more teachable than the apprentices. The teacher is far less assured of his ground than those who learn are of theirs. If the relation between the teacher and the taught is genuine, therefore, there is never a place in it for the authority of the know-it-all or the authoritative sway of the official. It is an exalted matter, then, to become a teacher – which is something else entirely than becoming a famous professor,” (1968:15).

The real teacher’s learning is to stand within a groundless bringing forth (*a-letheia*) to receive the presence within letting be that makes possible the letting learn (or letting be) of all that which is present, so that all beings

present participate in that which from the beginning belongs to them. The experience of the real teacher is the experience of presence self-concealing. In his own style, his silences, his language, his thought, his movements and mannerisms, the real teacher lets us learn the *praxis* of learning thinking: humanity, time and Being. Most importantly, the ways of his teaching let us learn *a-letheia* as transmitted through the ways of presencing-itself. But why do we have the impression that we are properly learning nothing from the real or authentic teacher?

This is so because what we are essentially learning is to think from within the two-fold of Being and beings, enjoined in the oneness of presencing-itself. We are learning about the essencing of man and Being as a whole. The authentic teacher is essentially teaching us what he is learning anew: that which is open for everything and nothing, that is, that which is open for the self-concealing of everything. But what is absence as such? What is nothing? Heidegger laconically says, “the nothing is the origin of negation, not vice versa,” (2000:107). For Heidegger the ‘nothing’ is no-thing – the Self as *subiectum* without subject or object. Hence, in and through the ‘nothing’ lies the plenitude of Being, and therein ‘philosophy’ is grounded in wonder (*enthousiasmos*). In fact, “the truth of metaphysics is grounded in this groundless ground,” (Heidegger 2000:112). Heidegger categorically states that nothingness is not a synonym for negation or negativity, nor is it equivalent to the semantic ‘not’. Rather it is more original than the not and negation (Heidegger 2000:107). He sharpens this point by telling us how the nothing overcomes nihilism. First he asserts what the ‘nothing’ is not, and then tells us what it makes possible: “Without the original revelation of the nothing, no selfhood and no freedom...For human existence the nothing makes possible the openedness of beings as such,” (Heidegger 2000:106). Nothingness is not a conceptual opposite of beings but an integral part of their essence as the presencing of absence (or self-concealing).

As previously mentioned, Heidegger contends that the genuine thinker and the true poet are the guardians of Being, they carefully preserve and guard the *mystery as mystery*. And Being, he tells us, cannot be conceived or established objectively. Being is ‘Nothing’ (No-thing), “. . . the purely ‘Other’ than everything that ‘is’, is that-which-is-not (*das Nicht-Seiende*). Yet this ‘Nothing’ functions as Being,” (2000:360, 353). Continuing, Heidegger cautions that Nothing is not merely nugatory, it is not the non-existent (*das Wesenlose*), it is Being-itself. Accordingly, Being manifests as the purely ‘Other’ than everything that is; it is the presence of an absence – as Being grants it also withholds. We can never truly say what Being is for it resists all naming and knowledge; it is the manifestation of mystery-itself, the unknowable; “we never get to know a mystery by unveiling or analyzing it; we only get to know it by carefully guarding the mystery as mystery,”

(Heidegger, 2001:259). We learn from the real or genuine teacher as he is letting-learn to address himself to the purely ‘Other’ than everything that is. We learn to let learn the mystery as mystery. We let learn to unveil that which lies-before-us and is hidden, and take it to heart, too. We let learn to *unify* in the heart’s inmost essence, with that which is within-beyond us. We learn from the greatness of a great teacher humanity as he himself is letting-learn anew the essential *humanitas* of *homo humanus*, within the presencing of absence. The real teacher is letting-learn humanity by addressing the purely Other, that is the faceless student which is his counterpart. In other words, he is addressing the whole of humanity from within the all-encompassing phenomenon of totality. Heidegger says:

“the teacher’s role in the pedagogy exchange is to represent the general equivalent, administering equivalencies among the students, who participate in his unity by subsuming themselves under his generality. Before the teacher, there is formal equality within the collective of students. Instruction is thus model on exchange: to teach, the teacher disregards the difference and the distinctions within the concrete student manifold and addresses himself to the faceless, abstract student that is his counterpart. Likewise, to learn, the student abandons the idiosyncratic expressions of his life for a generic way of thinking that raises him to the level of the teacher” (Heidegger in Allen and Axiotis, 2002:40-41).

To learn, the student abandons – that is, turns away from – ordinary modes of being and comportment so that in openness he lets learn that which the greatness of a great teacher offers through the gift of Time and Being. This way, the student is enabled to learn nothing else be learned than – learning. The student, through the teacher, learns to let wait for the silent calling of language, that is the call of the time of beingness irrupting into language in and as the *thanc* of thinking: that *is* a thanks-giving (*danken*). The student is enabled to let learn speak the voice of Being. Most importantly, through the most profound ‘ethics’ of ‘letting-be’ the student is able to let learn the noblest truth of freedom.<sup>122</sup>

Now is emerging a clearer understanding of Heidegger’s meaning: that, “the teacher is far less assured of his ground than those who learn are of theirs,” (1968:15). The teacher who is already cast into the unhomely and unfamiliar ground of the unknowable, is enabled to let the strangest and most mysterious presence of Being to ‘cast out’ his students of every relation

<sup>122</sup> A hermeneutic reading of Heidegger’s notion of historicity (in *Being and Time*) and his response to the issue of ethics in the Letter on Humanism, reveals, I believe, a strong acceptance of dignifying and preferable behaviours of personal integrity.

to the familiar. Along with the teacher on his pathway, the students let-learn of the unhomely and uncanny presence that touches their beings, their inmost heart, their humanity. The students are already involved in thinking about being, self and other; they care. They are already involved in trusting the utterly trustworthy Being of their beings. Accordingly, in proximity to the source, and in their sojourn on earth, teacher and students get to know the mystery of being and thinking not by unveiling or analysing it, rather by carefully guarding the mystery *as* mystery (see Heidegger, 1970:259).

Both teacher and student show interest, *interesse*, which, “means to be among and in the midst of things, or to be at the centre of a thing and to stay with it, (1968:5). *Inter-esse* means to stay *in between* the two-fold of Being and present beings, and to stay with presence-presencing. This transcends the determination of the term in representational thinking whereby ‘the interesting’ becomes the essence of something represented yet the next moment when the objectification of it passes we become indifferent towards it. *Interesse* also transcends all forms of self-interest. Most importantly, the ever-new discovery of the nature of man involves waiting for the space of free opening, waiting in interest, *interesse*. In this sense, interest is the gateway, the bridge or passage to the “happening of man”; it is waiting for the unconcealment of the hidden, the regioning of that-which-regions. In *Discourse on Thinking*, in a conversation between a teacher, a scientist and a scholar, the teacher says: “The historical rests in that-which-regions, and in what occurs as that-which-regions. It rests in what, coming to pass in man, regions him into his nature,”. This involves waiting. “Wait is a releasement through which we belong to that-which-regions, which still conceals its own nature ... When we let ourselves into releasement to-that-which regions, we will non-willing,” (Heidegger 1968:79). Authentic teaching keeps the interest because it is the happening within *interesse*. Furthermore, the students do not have to conform to the will of the teacher. The teacher is no longer the authority or a teacher in the common sense of the word. He is actively engaged in the existential *praxis* of teaching. The existential *praxis* of teaching is most mysterious. The noblest task of teaching is the renewal of learning in every way, to let learn that *of Being-itself*.

Heidegger declares that, “... nobody wants any longer to become a teacher today ... because the matter is exalted, because of its altitude,” (1968:15). Real teaching is the existential *praxis* of making a path, venturing into all realms of the *essent*, of the overpowering power, and in so doing letting learn that to Being belongs apprehension, – that is, man apprehended-apprehending the overpowering, and sharing in its power. Teaching is letting the students learn by engaging them in and through *that* which flung out of all familiar paths and calls on us to stand in nearness to its radical mysteriousness. Therein, teacher and student, all according to

their measure, discover and remember their essential relatedness and belonging to what in truth.

#### 4. TRUSTING TEACHERS

White (1995) has offered some useful insights into the notion of trust in education. Burbules (1993) picks two aspects as particularly pertinent and I agree with him. The first is that trust is strongest when no one notices it; that is, it is taken for granted as being-in-the-world-of-education and secondly and complementary is the context of risk in which trust is necessary. This context is apparent to all when we risk to disclose that which is, rather than what its representational is accepted as being. This is the risk that is central to ordinary thinking and to teaching being trusted to allow thinking to be thought. In this we must trust teachers to stand with us as we confront the future, our fate in openness, for this is the role of the university. Teaching is thus a form of temporality integration in terms of temporality and its horizontal structure. Through authentic and inauthentic understanding *phronesis* is achieved by the blending of contemplation with *praxis* in to self-understanding. Such disclosure needs directing and this openness is found in the teacher who is *phronimos*. Thus we trust in teaching to both enable us to let learn and to provide the authentic learning experiences that allow us to understand other aspects of being in the world.<sup>123</sup>

In this we need to trust in the world for our teachers to be trustworthy in their assessment of us and of those things we cherish or fear. In this way teachers need to be trustworthy both in a sense of competence and existentially. I will linger a while to explore these attributes and dispositions a little further.

#### 5. TRUSTWORTHINESS

In the context of teaching I would like to develop a tighter use of the term 'trustworthiness' as has been justified previously. To decide that someone, or oneself, is trustworthy to teach in the existential sense explored here is a judgement which is formed dialectically from a hermeneutic understanding

<sup>123</sup> Nietzsche writes compellingly about the experience of his 'teacher' Schopenhauer, thus: "(I) trusted him at once and my trust is the same now as it was nine years ago. Though this is a foolish and immodest way of putting it, I understand him as though it were for me he had written," (1983:133).

of who one ought to trust in a number of different circumstances. So when asked, 'Are you trustworthy?', the answer will not be dependent on one form of response or one particular context. I may be able to answer affirmatively if I understand by the question, 'Can you be trusted with a date for a surprise birthday party' but answer negatively if I am asked to be trusted with a national secret which I may feel is wrong to keep – perhaps the existence of forced labour camps on the Isle of Man. What establishes my trustworthiness is not only my competence, but that I will act according to my judgements and that those judgements are worthy and made consistently. However, I am not insisting on infallibility in this notion of existential trustworthiness but rather the sense of consistency of behaviour recognised by others and that certain, limited untrustworthy behaviours are considered out of character and – as long as they don't persist – are overlooked. The acceptance of a confidant's general trustworthiness in the competence of trust does not have to be personally experienced (it may be ascribed in the role of mentor or at least *prima facie* ascribed for doctor, priest or even teacher) whereas existential trustworthiness is ontological, growing over time, like friendship and companionship. This form of trustworthiness is not a competence but a disposition.

A test of trustworthiness is that commitments in the present, which have no defined future location for their resolution, ought to leave the trustor feeling comfortable in the belief that the trustee will not renege on the obligations accepted when the trust was bestowed. Of course this perception of trustworthiness from the trustor puts expectations on the trustee which she may not be prepared or able to accept but, if the trustee is of a trustworthy disposition, she will declare this. An everyday analysis of those who are deemed to be trustworthy might expect to reveal that a person worthy of trust would also exhibit benevolence and respect for others, motivated through compassion and sympathy. This common sense view dictates that someone acting with these sentiments ought to be worthy to be trusted, in the sense of reducing the risk of them acting deceitfully or exploitatively, particularly when the trustor is vulnerable.

One could reasonably expect them to be true to and care for the trustor. Such a trustee would give the trustor a belief that the trustee's actions were not motivated exclusively from her own self-interest<sup>124</sup> or concern and that, as trustee, she would be capable of such non-interested acts. Clearly the trustor does not have to conclude that for a person to act trustworthily they

<sup>124</sup> This is the view offered by Sartre when he states, "all human existence is a passion, the famous self-interest being only on the way freely chosen among others to realize this passion," (1986:626).



themselves have to act reciprocally, and nor does the trustor have to adopt such a disposition herself towards the trustee, although both may feel it fairer so to do.<sup>125</sup> One has only to believe that the one trusted will be directly and favourably moved by the thought that someone is counting on her. Hardin helps to summarise the notion by distinguishing between this moral perspective and the reliability of the skilled performer, stating that in the latter trust is, “independent of the moral approbation that might be thought applicable to trustworthiness,” (1996:28). It is not clear if this is wholly independent but it serves to suggest that trustworthiness is not based on a calculative form of economic transaction but that a necessary condition is that one party is deemed trustworthy.

## 6. LYING AND ERRORS OF JUDGEMENT

Through ordinary thinking one is seeking to resolve and find an ontological position for oneself to face one’s own future based on existential trust. In this pursuit, any negation of trust through dishonesty or lack of tolerance by a teacher can lead to significant turmoil in the world in which one is becoming. This can shatter the basis upon which decisions have been made and leave the trustor alienated from himself and others. Lying can be one such negation which may never be morally good although it may be done in a good cause.<sup>126</sup> It is dialectical, for those that lie may fear the effects of disclosure and being lied to themselves whilst those who are deceived are manipulated.<sup>127</sup> Sartre’s discussion on lying illuminates this. He explains that, “the liar possesses a complete comprehension of the lie and of the truth which he is altering. It is sufficient that an overall opacity hides his intentions from the Other; it is sufficient that the Other can take the lie for truth. The lie consciously affirms that it exists by nature as *hidden from the Other*; it utilizes for its own profit the ontological duality of myself and myself in the eyes of Other,” (1986:49).

However, Sartre also points to the potential for self-deception where it might suit some purposes to embrace a falsehood. In its extreme it is the ploy of using rehearsed *naïveté* or deliberate and irresponsible misreading of

<sup>125</sup> Simone Weil comments on this when she talks of who ought to owe gratitude to whom in a loving relation. See ‘Gravity and Grace’, (1997:61).

<sup>126</sup> See Bok (1989:25-32) for an everyday accommodation to the notion of lying.

<sup>127</sup> Scanlon creates a general, yet contractual, principle for forbidding lying which states, “One may not, in the absence of special justification, act with the intention of leading someone to form a false belief about some matter, or with the aim of confirming a false belief he or she already holds,” (1998:318).

situations to avoid facing one's responsibility or the negation of self by others.<sup>128</sup> This is both being-with-others whilst observing them for one's benefit; using others as a means to an end or giving up to others that which is central to one's autonomy, the responsibility for one's actions. This behaviour is bad-faith in that it is self-deceptive. What is more, it can readily lead to alienation or self-estrangement, from what one might become by losing oneself in the dualism of object and subject or in the determinism of others.<sup>129</sup> To avoid commitment through which authenticity can be realised, the competencies of being-for-others may be used, in bad faith, as a sham of security for inauthentic relationships and engagements. It is irrational and such a person is personally culpable for the consequences of his action. Such acts are destructive<sup>130</sup> and if they are rendered against others, "the withdrawal of respect is its only fit punishment," (Kant, 1992:91).

But why would anyone trust another when experience would point to the foolhardiness of such behaviour? This false trust occurs when the difficulty of being-in-the-world is not resolvable by the trustor and the world remains as it is but the need for resolution cannot be put aside. To fill the gap between what is known about the situation and what is the desired outcome, we reconstitute the world. Through our emotions we alter the way in which we are in the world and our world-view. In so doing we, as Sartre has said, "magically 'will' certain qualities upon real objects: but those qualities are false," (1996:75). In this way we engage in trusting relations in bad-faith in the hope that our emotions shield us from the consequences of our actions. This may be in the excessive joy of an unexpected offer of salvation (which logically is outside our experience of predictable behaviours from the person making the offer) or in despair where we hide from the real situation like

<sup>128</sup> In an interesting passage Macmurray (1995:69-70) writes, "Since mutuality is constitutive for the personal, it follows that 'I' need 'you' in order to be myself. My primary fear is, therefore, that 'you' will not respond to my need, and that in consequence my personal existence will be frustrated". Clearly the risk to question others, particularly those in authority, is a risky business for the affirmation of oneself.

<sup>129</sup> Sartre deals with the nature of lying as a universal in both *Being and Nothingness* (1986:48-49) and in *Existentialism and The Emotion*. There he writes when confronting the liar, "what would happen if everyone looked at things that way? There is no escaping this disturbing thought except by a kind of double-dealing. A man who lies and makes excuses for himself by saying 'not everyone does that' is someone with an uneasy conscience, because the act of lying implies that a universal value is conferred upon the lie," (1990b:18-19).

<sup>130</sup> White points out that blind trust, "will be seen as moral weakness that should be replaced by a more carefully monitored trust," (1995:56). She is, however, quick to make the point that this monitoring ought not to go too far!

children who close their eyes to make themselves disappear. In both cases the purpose is to have a responsibility-free gamble. Should the trusting relation work then the 'magic' has been successful, for which we can take credit. If it fails, then we may claim to have been blinded, seduced or exploited (even though it was initiated by ourselves) and claim it unfair to be held culpable for our actions.

An error of judgement in trust might take the form of exceeding the limits of the appropriateness of the relationship. Buber (1966) recognises that appropriate limits on a relationship may constrain full mutuality but that these limits are correct to maintain the purpose of the relationship. If these limits are abused then one may compromise oneself or the other by taking the intimacy of the relationship beyond its function. Buber uses the illustration of the openness and trustworthiness of the teacher to facilitate the learning experience but not to exceed it. Other such examples would be between a doctor and a patient of the opposite sex or a priest and his congregation. The danger is that any change in the relationship might be one-sided and lead into a manipulative or exploitative relationship secured on the basis of the power which one could exert over the vulnerable other.

At the opposite extreme an error might occur as existential mistrust. This is well defined by Gordon as, "a relationship that arises between two people when one of the persons believes that the other person denies his right to exist and to realize his potential," (1986:4). This is the negation of trust. It can be reversed only if the fears associated with confronting another person as a fellow member of humanity, and not as an object, can be overcome. This means not holding back in dialogue (nor losing oneself in it either) but meeting and experiencing conflict by being together as being-in-the-world with the mistrusted. This is risky. As Baier points out, to know when to respond to offers of trust with suspicion and when not to invite trust, particularly for the vulnerable, is as important as when to give and refuse trust. "We should not assume that promiscuous trustworthiness is any more a virtue than is indiscriminating distrust. It is appropriate trustworthiness, appropriate trusting, appropriate encouragement to trust which will be virtues, as will judicious untrustworthiness, selective refusal to trust, discriminating discouragement of trust," (1995:16).

Teaching in higher education also carries privileges and associated obligations.

"If we can clarify our perception of duty and gain public acceptance of it, we will have fulfilled an important obligation to the society that nurtures us. That obligation constitutes the highest institutional form of academic duty," (Kennedy, 1997:22). These are the closing sentences in the first chapter of Kennedy's 'Academic Duty'. By placing duty central to the notion of academics in higher education institutions, Kennedy identifies a moral

responsibility for academics which offers a way of re-establishing the trust which was shared between the university sector and the general public.

Duty in the existential sense is not, however, the Kantian imperative of following given universals (although we might choose to act as if they did) nor the liberal balance of rights, but is an accountability to oneself to have the courage and skill to interpret one's individuality within our world as a dialectic between oneself and humanity. In this it is an ethical exercise and is built through trust as an implicit obligation – voluntarily accepted in the case of the academic – to pursue worthy activities and not the mechanisms of competencies. To re-establish such an obligation, if indeed it has really been missing, in an environment of managerialism will be no quick fix. It might require a fundamental commitment to excellence for the revelation of the potentialities of those who offer themselves to the pursuit of higher education. It will require a reconstitution of what higher education has become; a return to an ethos of personal growth which better represents what humanity might become, rather than offering the other-servingness of blinkered higher skill training. Moreover it requires the teacher to be trust worthy and veracious

## 7. STUDENT/TEACHER – TEACHER/STUDENT

Existential *praxis* requires teachers to be students and students to be teachers. It confronts the hegemony of traditional teaching by replacing the learning to become for others with a constitution of authentic becoming, not just in an economic sense but as a constant rejuvenation of our identity. It is not a teaching where the teacher presents a “digestive concept of knowledge,” (Freire, 1972:23) where the words chosen by teacher fill the student but one in which together, in their openness they explore what might be known.

I am advocating a pedagogy based on dialogical relationships. If these are taken as a basis for authentic realisation in higher education, they lead to a number of assumptions about the student experience against which our current higher education provision could be judged. Building and combining those offered by Giugliano (1988) and Gordon (1986) some of these might be:

1. Students are enabled to engage with the world as it is: not on the basis of assumed functions, utilities and purposes, but as they experience it.
2. Students are encouraged to show resolution rather than fear, and involvement rather than indifference, in their engagement with the world.
3. Students' relationships with knowledge are dialectic and pluralistic.

4. Students seek excellence for and in-themselves rather than seeking others' approval through the externality of success.
5. Students engage actively with the world by turning dialogues within a scholarly community into *praxis*.

To summarise, the components of this *praxis* are committed teachers and committed students to whom, in part, we offer the, "authority and assumptions of the responsibility for the world," (Arendt, 1968:189). Such moral responsibility needs nurturing and the responsibility we invest in our scholarly teachers ought to be a heavy one. It is not sufficient for them to have the skills and techniques of subject and pedagogy, they ought to be able to engage with students on the basis of their practical wisdom<sup>131</sup> and through their actions show their judgements are those in which we can trust. I do not subscribe here to any particular form of prescribed combination of virtuous characteristics, rather I suggest that in their educational practice they need to be worthy of trust.

<sup>131</sup> Carr (1987) has explored the notion of *phronesis* guiding the practice of education. He defines educational practice as, "an ethical activity undertaken in pursuit of educationally worthwhile ends," (1987:156-7). This view is not unchallenged in the literature, although it is often his methodology at arriving at his conclusion using his definition of educational practice, rather than the conclusions themselves, which are the focus of his detractors' comments (see Jonathan, 1987; Cooper, 1987; and MacKenzie, 1991). Smith conducts his analysis of practical wisdom with a rather pragmatic use of Aristotle borrowing, "from Aristotle's picture where it is insightful," (1999:420).

## Chapter 10

# A TRUSTING *PRAXIS* FOR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

*“But if existence really does precede essence, man is responsible for what he is. Thus existentialism’s first move is to make every man aware of what he is and to take full responsibility for his existence which rests on him,”* Sartre, (1990b:16).

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Sartre’s assertion which opens this chapter is a fundamental and uniting principle of existential views of the world which have clear educational implications. In rejecting the notion that there is an essential human nature, an educational ideal based on finding and developing basic and universal characteristics may also be abandoned. A *praxis*, which is based on the revelation of the active relationship between subject, teacher and student,<sup>132</sup> is what Gadotti (1996) calls a ‘pedagogy of *praxis*’. It positions education as addressing the dialectic tensions between teaching and being taught in an integrative manner which reunites the individual with others. Should such a synthesis be achieved, then the responsibility of universities is to engage in the spreading of education (providing lifelong learning opportunities) for wider purposes than specifically the provision of employment skills. If, as advocated by Gadotti, education follows such a *praxis*, then the notion of a separation in education between vocational/academic and practical/

<sup>132</sup> For Gadotti it is not just a dialogue but a relationship revealed through conflict.

theoretical ceases to have meaning.<sup>133</sup> Further, such a pedagogy could liberate us so as to reveal our authenticity in-the-world by confronting our every-day-ness. Our judgements are not theoretical in the sense that they bear no relevance to our actions but are existentially involving and relate both to the current situation and to the responsibility to act for our own future.

One of the most liberating freedoms of this *praxis* is the engagement and collaboration *with* others rather than *for* others. This is manifested in education not through unstructured instruction controlled by the academic but in a joint exploration of truth through engaging in the search for knowledge and understanding. A *praxis* of higher education conceives of students as partners in the exploration of knowledge, pushing at the boundaries of what is knowable. It is not prescriptive of the form that the search takes and accepts many correct interpretations of the meaning of scholarly experience but, above all, it is involving and committed. It rejects the instrumentality of education as a static form of skills acquisition for the affirmation of self by others: it requires of the student the courage to seek his existential freedom through the search for knowledge. This *praxis* offers choice and the associated responsibility that goes with making these personal judgements for action. It is worthy educational practice in that it encourages practical judgements on the form and content of the curriculum which Smith has argued have a, “significant and irreducibly ethical dimension,” (1999:423).

In the previous chapters I have contrasted the existential engagement with other more ideologically prescriptive or more competence-based approaches. In so doing I have implied an institution-wide commitment to all forms of underlying approach to curriculum and pedagogical design. It need not be so. The existential *praxis* can be actioned by each individual with an interest in university education. Its fundamental requirement is the seeking of involvement in the process of education, not just in the skills which are identified as teacher or student. It requires personal, not impersonal, engagement. An educational *praxis* viewed in this way enables Williams (1994) to argue that the tension between theoretical learning and vocationalism is illusory and with it any sense of superiority attributed to either form of knowledge.

<sup>133</sup> Lum (2003) makes a similar observation, not that vocational education ought to reside in any particular institution, rather that how it is currently conceptualised negates, the being of the practitioners and replaces this being with a set on objectified responses to external stimuli. Lum’s point, I believe, is that the vocational capabilities that define the being of the practitioners are not separate from, but are the being of, the practitioner whose comportment to the world reflects this. This comportment is educative not instructional.

## **2. A PRAXIS OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

Just how might one go about building a university where scholarship becomes the practice of revealing one's authenticity? A community which is not held together only, "by the technical organisation of universities and faculties," (Heidegger 1985, :482) but by the spirit of scholarship as identified in letting learn. To achieve this my arguments will point to a learning community where the community practises the scholastic processes of conversation, involvement and engagement as modes of revealing knowledge. These allow teacher and scholar to engage as interactive partners, collaborating in an educational project as critical thinkers and as mutual learners. For the authentic student the practice of learning is as important as the acquisition of the practical skills of scholarship. For this to happen requires a dialectical reflection on behalf of the universities as well as action, it requires teachers to provide guidance to new scholars as they create their own learning experiences and it requires a form of trust where, "dialogue is grounded in the respect of persons," (Willems et al., 1995:10). Certainly this does not necessarily require an existential interpretation, but an existentialist discourse has benefits in formulating a way of understanding the process of the fusion of subject and object essential to this approach.

The scholarly dialogue which forms the boundaries that the community embraces, in trust, is for those whose intentions are to contribute scholarship and who offer a willingness to risk their prejudice and traditions in the search for a future whose relationship with the present and the past is unknown. It needs respectful individuals who trust each other as one in humanity to make it work. To distrust, I suggest, is to favour hegemony and passivity, leading to egocentric manipulation and exploitation. At its worst it misuses other scholars (e.g. research students) as objects for the satisfaction of another academic's career.

An existential *praxis* cannot just be a search for one or even many forms of external knowledge: it is a personal as well as a moral endeavour. This is a significant point in the connectedness of self and others, and one on which Heidegger's interpretation of every-day-ness and his revelation of what one's possibilities might be is helpful.

We live in a world in which we can experience things – objects and people – as having a potentiality or an actuality that can be realised through their use or their action. This distinction is central to our temporal continuity as we face what we might become rather than accept what others shape for us. That is, for Heidegger, the potentiality of an entity is its standing-



reserve,<sup>134</sup> which is realised in its use. This is a very helpful concept for it does not presuppose the essential purpose of the object, just all the things it might be. An alternative position is that which has an Aristotelian heritage where entities have their own actuality; they are what we have learned them to be. The temporality of these two positions is almost too obvious, for the purpose of entities is unrevealed through their potentialities until their use. The temporality of their user is likewise revealed so they must share and shape each other's potential future. On the other hand, if we view entities as being what they are presented to be then their temporality is grounded in the present albeit that this present may be a sequence of now moments.<sup>135</sup>

However, we do classify from our general experience of being in the world (Heidegger talks of us being caught up in the world of things, entities and attractions); we see or understand this world in certain ways. This understanding allows us to see things (brands, people, our own becoming) in terms of an actual action in which they realise their potential. For Heidegger this is seeing objects as being 'ready-at-hand' where what they are and what they do are indiscriminately blended as one. When their functionality is effected then we see them as 'present-at-hand' revealed in their potentialities. For instance a CD is a means of communicating information when the technology is available to use it as such: when the technology is not available or is not known the disk's other potentialities relating to its form are revealed to us: necklace, weapon, decoration, sun reflector, etc.

He attempts to help us realise that our taken-for-granted world is more complicated than it is generally accepted to be and that a firm understanding of it is difficult, if not impossible to grasp. The unrealised potential of our taken-for-granted-world is its 'standing reserve' and, in the sense meant by Heidegger, is the underlying genuine authenticity revealed through actions and use; it is its potentiality, hidden, latent and waiting to be revealed by being-in-the-world. In regards to understanding human action it offers a mode of understanding of an individual's comportment in his world which transcends any one mode of revealing.

Clearly such a position allows the criticism of relativism. I do not intend to rehearse the argument both for and against objectivism and relativism, but rather point to the work of Bernstein (1996) and his attempts to go beyond both as a conversation on human rationality. He offers helpful insights from the perspective of hermeneutics into the *praxis* of everyday life. Seeking to develop the concept of dialogue as the basis of interpretation he claims that:

<sup>134</sup>For a discussion of this concept and how it relates to the revealing of the meaning of entities through technology see Heidegger (1977:17).

<sup>135</sup>Of course in our everydayness this distinction is blurred.

“Central to this new understanding is a dialogical model of rationality that stresses the practical, communal character of this rationality in which there is choice, deliberation, interpretation, judicious weighing and application of ‘universal criteria’ and even rational disagreement about which criteria are relevant and most important. It is an illusion to think that before the fact we always know (in principle) what will count as a decisive refutation of a proposed theory that the epistemologist can discover fixed, permanent rules that are to be used to resolve difference,” Bernstein (1996:172).

Bernstein argues for the primacy of practical wisdom and its links to *praxis* as incommensurability with a notion of objectivism and relativism. *Praxis* and *phronesis* go beyond such intra-separations of knowledge. The implicit acceptance of the subject/object distinction negates the productive and communal interpretation of phenomena from what we know and from how we might understand. It rejects the common ground of solidarity of human experience through deliberation, interpretation, communicative interaction, dialogue and judgement.<sup>136</sup> The *praxis* Bernstein is proposing seeks to equate rationalism with truth, where, “subjective becomes virtually synonymous with the private, idiosyncratic, and arbitrary,” (1996:46).

One contemporary supporter of existential higher education who illustrates this approach is Barnett. In his 1997 pamphlet he approves of, “a higher education that can help in the formation of human beings who have a positive orientation towards uncertainty, complexity and change. A disposition of openness – epistemologically and socially – together with a readiness actively to engage with change and to assist in its development are necessary qualities. In turn, an educational vocabulary around notions of being, value, self-understanding and dialogue suggests itself,” (1997a:31). I differ from Barnett’s view on one main point: his willingness to accept that both student and teacher have distinct, different and separate contributions to make to the educative process. I see any status relationship between teachers and students as only inhibiting creativity, stifling dialogue and leading back to the rights-dominated exchanges of liberalism.

Finally the notion of education is clearly futural. It is the facing of the future and confronting fate. In this sense the binding of the community of scholar, their revealed community is their seeking of letting learn within a trusting context. This trusting context is that which enables thinking within the fear of uncertainty and is manifest in academic freedom. This academic freedom is not without obligation (or personal risk, see Altbach, 2001) for it

<sup>136</sup> See Bernstein (1996) Part 4.

requires those so granted to pursue knowledge to the best of their abilities and actively protect the right of others so to do.<sup>137</sup> Furthermore, as I have shown earlier, breaking trust leads to notions of betrayal because of the investment within the trusting context. It takes risks to think originally and only existential trusting can make those risks appropriate.

### **3. PILLARS OF EXISTENTIAL HIGHER EDUCATION**

To build an institutional environment where a community of practice based on existential trust can flourish requires a number of protecting, facilitating and enabling pillars to enable an environment of freedom to be sustainable. Based on my previous arguments I suggest these might be:

- existential trust of oneself and others
- active engagements
- existential reflection
- recognition of the difference between accomplishment and achievement.
- intrinsic quality assurance.

Each of these is now discussed in more detail below.

#### **3.1 Existential trust of oneself and of Others**

As an empathetic interpretation of benevolence and respect for the individual, I believe existential trust gives the moral co-ordinates and forms a creative context for the scholarly dialogue central to the *praxis* of higher education to take place. Through existential trust, a dialectic can develop which facilitates our creative engagement in the process of becoming with others. Interpersonal trust based on compassion and competent judgements of others can unshackle the self from the imagined security of its inauthentic identity as a role-player. It can assist an individual in fashioning a future which acknowledges the past but is not constrained by it, and allows the freedom of personal choice. Such an environment allows one to flourish to the extent that one is ready to bear the responsibility for one's free choices. It is a responsibility that ought not lightly to be accepted, and one that can benefit from the mentoring of those who have accepted the challenge themselves. To take up such a challenge, the student must accept and trust that he is able to make judgements on the correct course of action for him as

<sup>137</sup> De George, 2003 provides a fuller discussion of this and related points.

part of humanity. This self-trust can be developed from the pursuit and understanding of scholarly activity under the guidance of an appropriate teaching community.

Self-trust is based on the notion of respect. It is the development of a responsibility for oneself as part of humanity; the realisation of personal authority over what one trusts to be true. Such trust comes from the experience of involvement. If this involvement, whether it be for the classics or for mechanical engineering, is to be more than a mere observational acquaintance with the subject, it requires the student to become one with his subject so dissolving any subject/object divide. It requires the skills of rational argument as well as the passion of personal identification with the subject. The scholar becomes inseparable from his achievement. The classics scholar 'is' civilisation, the bridge 'is' the bridge of the engineer, in the same way as a piece of art might be accepted as representing the being of the artist. These acts of scholarship are acts of creativity, of becoming what one was not previously. The courage to accept the unknowable outcome of such inquiry is what, I propose, universities ought to be providing for our societies and the struggle that accompanies such inquiry has worth in itself. It is where the value of a scholarly community gains its credence. Scholars together seeking truth in a mutually trustworthy environment, acting as teacher and student to each other, form a moral community from which each can safely draw guidance.

On the student's part, she needs to continue her skills of empathetic perception which require a knowledge of oneself in order to understand, rather than just reflect upon, the feelings of another. Lehrer (1996:5) encapsulates this as being able to, "consider myself worthy of trust in what I accept and prefer," and, as Hardin (1996:28) suggests, it may also extend to trusting in knowing where you are untrustworthy. This is a learning process through which we experience what we believe, and develop ways of seeing these beliefs. In so doing, the notion of many correct but different interpretations becomes compelling, and we learn to be tolerant yet self-assured members of our communities. This may well not be related to how advanced we are in understanding our subject but more closely related to our understanding of our identity.

These reflective and dialectic practices also contribute to self-belief, knowledge and trust which differentiates the one from others. To trust in one's own judgement, to make decisions on one's own preference and to accept the results as a reasoned scenario, facilitates the ontological integration of authentic and autonomous actions. In building one's network of preferences and acceptances in the every-day-ness of action, one first reveals oneself as a self-trusting and then as a trustworthy person. Thus one who is trustworthy must be able to distinguish between justified competence

in certain arenas, whether propositional or of capacity, and where one is incompetent. Burstow claims that, “authenticity requires him to learn so as to be able to accept what must be accepted, and – something Sartre also includes in his description of authenticity – to change what can be changed,” (1983:176).

An important component in the achievement of this *praxis* is existential trust which – if present – can facilitate scholars risking their societal roles in the pursuit of truth. Here scholars can risk their own vulnerabilities and search for a future for humanity in which well-being for all can flourish. The realisation that personal responsibility for the solidarity of humanity is a communal *praxis* gives a purpose to educational engagement that requires nurturing. This is particularly important given the paradox of globalisation, which condenses time and space yet fails to realise any universals in a solidity of humanity through technicism. Consider, for example, a charity broadcast: the emotional images of suffering followed by the amelioration of guilt by a credit card payment which makes a fiction of the universality of solidarity with humanity. Higher education can, through its local community, provide opportunities for students to be doers rather than mere electronic observers. Through dialogue with others, insights and understandings can be revealed which transcend theoretical<sup>138</sup> analysis, offering students choices as to what actions are worthy of their own well-being as part of humanity. It can also help students make wise practical judgements. The university, I suggest, is a place to renew the moral values which can sustain the solidarity of humanity. If we cannot trust those in whom we invest our future to understand and make sound moral judgements (based on a notion of humanity) then our post-modern society is in danger of fragmenting into small, alienating groups, where we have nothing to say to each other than rehearsing the perceived reality provided by the global news machines. This will lead to a loss of authenticity with a consequential danger of the spread of totalitarianism.

### 3.2 Active engagement

Collier (1993), a protagonist for a wider, more proactive ethical dimension to – and integrated within – the higher education experience, acknowledges the dominance of an academic culture centred on the power of established disciplines. This often, according to him, hides values which are implicit in the rationality of logical argument. It can present students with a perception

<sup>138</sup> This is not to assume that theoretical learning carries no ethical substance. Dunne (1997:437, n15,) in a revealing footnote, makes this point well.

of a world where sentiment and empathy are screened out to offer an instrumentality which lacks a sense of humanity. He argues, in terms of curriculum design, that students should gain an 'existential reality' of the issues, to experience the subjective perception of actually dealing with complex ethical issues by being-in-the-world.<sup>139</sup> In a later paper he goes further and considers the ethical climate of higher education, proposing that for it to function as an environment able to encourage moral reasoning and commitment in its students, it needs to offer the, "trustworthiness of its authorities and a certain spirit of mutual concern and trust," (1997:74).

Collier's position is similar to that offered in Gordon's discussion of the culture of success and excellence, coupled with the active and passive participation in understanding a truth mentioned in an earlier footnote. The search for excellence is a personal exploration. Its realisation for the individual and for the wider community is self-evident: it is not competitive, it is the actualisation of potential and is a worthy goal for an existential *praxis* of education. It is the antithesis of managerialism's cult of success, where achievement is measured in terms of external criteria which provide comparative ranking of that achievement. It has little to do with actualising opportunities but has everything to do with a utilitarian way of allocating resources. It is the basis of the allocation of money and reward, both of which are peripheral to the existential project of education.

Accompanying the notion of success is the passive acceptance of a given authority. This leads to the notion that the right answer is that which is given by 'authorities'. It encourages observation and passive engagement with the object matter of study. It fails the student who wants active involvement in what he studies. In the former the learner is untouched by what is learnt, in the latter the student makes the subject of his study his own, blurring the distinction between what is and what might be. Such engagement encourages ownership of the education, the search for knowledge becomes personal and the acceptance of it is experienced as one's own knowledge. For instance, the notion of relativity is judged to be right not just because of the authority of Einstein but because, through personal identification and involvement with the problem, it comes to be known to be right. Such ownership requires competencies to undertake the investigation, and this is one of the critical roles of the university: the provision of skills which enable practical efficacy and wisdom to flourish in an educated public.

<sup>139</sup> Expression of this notion is found in the work and life of Simone Weil (see for example 'Gravity and Grace', 1997).

In this *praxis* scholars have a responsibility to their community and to institutions of higher education. In return it is natural and fair that academic freedom<sup>140</sup> is given, for it is accepted with that responsibility. That same responsibility is extended to the relationship with students. The experience of education is not one of exploitation of able students for the personal benefit of the teacher or researcher; it is one of enthusiastic collaboration. It is not transferable skills nor is it vocationalism; it is self growth which is part of all education, and which does not finish with compulsory education, but rather attempts to redress the harm done by a national curriculum and guard against its introduction into higher education. It is about personal commitment. To quote Kennedy, “The one-to-one academic relationships, however informal they may seem, require at least as much planned effort and special skill as the lecture and the seminar. They represent the highest form of academic duty, but they also embody the greatest risk of failure,” (1997:116).

To gain trust in the student/teacher relationship, both owe it to themselves to develop a mutual personal respect. This may be brought about by the development of a responsibility for oneself as part of humanity and the realisation of personal authority over what one trusts to be true. It is manifest by showing active engagement in studies on behalf of humanity and us. It is found in the studies of everyday problems as well as in the scholarly understanding of traditional texts. It is seen in the act of involvement with technology, while not allowing it to be a cause of alienation from humanity. It is the confrontation of given mass media messages, presented as authority, through the questioning of their purpose and their reality. It is through what Nussbaum (1997) calls ‘cultivation of humanity’ as a member of it.

This is a learning process through which we experience what we believe, and develop ways of seeing these beliefs. In so doing, the notion of many correct but different interpretations becomes compelling, and we learn to be tolerant yet self-assured members of our communities. This may well not be related to how advanced we are in understanding our subject but more closely related to our understanding of our identity. Its manifestation is in the identities – of which quality is an inseparable part – of the graduates it reveals.

<sup>140</sup> The critical ideology of academic freedom is not developed here. For a discussion of the topic Menand’s 1996 edited collection is recommended.

### 3.3 Existential reflection

According to Freire, “the existent subject reflects upon his life within the very domain of existence, and questions his relationship, with the world. His domain of existences is the domain of work, of history of culture, of values – the domain in which men experience the dialectic between determinism and freedom,” (1972:52). The world, as Rosenthal interprets Heidegger, “is not a collection of intra-worldly things, but rather the context of meaning within which worldly things can reveal themselves in their significance,” (2000:52).

We have thus come via a leap of faith or some other way – I hope – to a proposal that whatever has meaning has temporality and that awareness of one’s own temporality can lead to *phronesis*, lack of awareness cannot. Further, technologies which offer us the abolition of time (e.g. Just-in-Time management), although valuable, prioritize – even utilitarianise – our being and risk a retreat into nihilism. This nihilism closes off future possibilities, hinging them to the temporality of rationality<sup>141</sup> – a rationality of the social present – of bad-faith and inauthenticity. When this is evidenced through activities that are as being-in-the-world rather than observing, *phronesis* can be revealed; where it is not then *poiesis* and the instrumentality of *technē* dominates.

Reflection on one’s own behaviour as a scholar is different from reflection on oneself as a scholar skilled in a range of competencies appropriate for a defined role in society. The second is mere observation and is not being, existentially, a scholar. Reflection in *praxis* is not remedial in the sense of achieving some ‘given’ ideal; rather, it is iterative, an engagement with oneself with others as a scholar.<sup>142</sup> We go through the motions of being a teacher or a student without exploring what the functionalities of such roles have for us personally.

### 3.4 Educational accreditation should be about “enriched-merit” not achievements but accomplishments

Achievements and accomplishment are not the same thing and so the entitlement that go with them ought not to be confused for each represents a

<sup>141</sup> See Habermas (1998) Chapter 1.

<sup>142</sup> See both Schon (1983) and Barnett (1997b) for his critique of Schon’s concept as lacking in theoretical underpinning and for a discussion of professionalism in general and academia in particular.



different form of entitlement. The achievement of an outcome criterion may be achieved through consideration and preparation, through intuition or through luck but once the outcomes have been achieved the entitlement is established and it should be given regardless of the circumstances provided all actions were legal. In this sense a student has a right to, say, a grade regardless of effort and, indeed, merits it since specific behaviours have conformed to the rules that determine the entitlement. In making the decision on entitlement there is no need to make reference to the particular qualities of the individual or the professional judgement of the academic. If the student did achieve the grade by luck or by privileged circumstances, home life, raw intelligence or middle class he/she is still entitled to the grade but, in an educational context such as we have described, does that student deserve the grade as much as a student who worked hard, overcame disadvantages, acquired knowledge and wisdom through reflection, extended him/herself and showed the disposition of tolerance, respect and empathy?

Is the accomplishment of the lucky student the same, less or more worthy than the student that struggles? If we only adhere to the outcome criterion then we have to answer yes. We however, see something missing in this meriting when applied to higher education. I want to advocate a depth in the student actions, an engagement with the subject and with his/her community as well as the achievement of the outcome in order to qualify for the grade to signify an accomplishment (indeed isn't this a part of the reputation that certain universities have over others?). In short, I would want to see a growing moral maturity.

From what I have said, when entitlements are applied then they might be considered in two senses: (i) a formal notion of entitlement along the lines of merit and (ii) a morally rich notion that requires a particular kind of content: an enriched-merit entitlement. If we draw this distinction this would enable us to say that good education should be judged by the worth of its accomplishments and not just by the achievements of its criteria based outcomes.

Consider the following example: if the entitlement for academic credit for a Public Relations course was that you need to have a photo published in a newspaper, in the first instance (i) a picture of a drunken fellow-student naked would qualify as entitlement based on merit. Should it though? Our argument is that the educated student should have drawn from her learning experiences and be able to distinguish what is right or wrong, what is decent, ethical, moral etc. The student should have drawn on his/her knowledge and not submitted the picture for although it achieves the learning outcome it is not worthy of higher education.

To distinguish between the two types of entitlement above I refer to the second (ii) as "*enriched-merit*" for it enables professional judgement to be

applied to the development of criteria. It draws from the definition of desert developed by McLeod (1996) who considers it as something that binds three sorts of things: (a) a subject, (b) a thing deserved by the subject and (c) a basis in virtue of which the subject deserves it. The third point is well expressed by Griffin (1997) in his discussion of value judgements, where he finds that accomplishment is a central prudential value for humans generally for it is more than an achievement; it is an achievement of worth. To make these decisions in the educational context we need wise judgements and we should hold academics responsible for making them.

I thus advocate an assessment system somewhat like that envisioned by Hussey and Smith (2002) and Curzon-Hobson (2002), one where outcomes have a role but the unpredictability of the engagement precludes a predefined form and content of assessment and where the shared responsibility of teacher and student towards their learning community is the overall criteria for judgements. Hussey and Smith's (2002) critique and review of outcome-based learning upon which entitlements are judged is well made. They clearly point to the potential of explicit criteria as hampering good teaching in the sense that we use it of engagement, replacing the academic community experience with its necessary risks with a way of teaching that, "can be tied to the assessment with unprecedented precision," (2002:223). This, as they point out, is a false precision and one we would see directly linked to the notion of quality as conceived in the 'educational' product model. Indeed on the central tenet of our proposal – judgement – they say, "judgement may either be impossible to capture in proportional form [the form of criteria and standards] or may require such lengthy and convoluted language to be pointless," (Hussey and Smith, 2002:231) (Parenthesis added for clarity). Curzon-Hobson (2002) goes further under a rubric of trust I believe the community could create. He sees assessment as a collaborative process, set as part of the learning process by students for students removing the hegemony of the academic disciplines and of the academic.

So let me now turn to surplus value and the exploitation potential in its distribution. The generation of surplus value from the value of labour input is manifest in creativity, productivity and efficiency. In itself, it might be considered an expected occurrence in a capitalist-based system. At this point I make no claim that surplus value is exploitation – only that it exists and it is deserved in some form and on some basis by the owners of the labour that created it. In the educational context we have got used to it being promoted and measured as the excess return that the student (customer) receives for her investment in the cost of her education. This surplus or consumer value might vary with regard to the price paid for it (student, government) but not to the extent to which it was accrued. For instance, if

the price of a product rises or reduces all the price mechanism is doing is re-distributing the surplus value created by the labour value between the seller of the product and its customers. One might be getting a better deal than the other but their combined benefit is in excess of the labour value used to manufacture the product or service.

The issue of exploitation then hinges on whether the employee is willing to accept the wages of production and the distribution of surplus value, if it occurs. If the employee can evaluate her worth and is satisfied with the return on the labour invested, then she may be satisfied with her condition but still be exploited. Offering a more general view of exploitation, Steiner's (1984) liberal model of exploitation defines exchanges of value on a continuum beginning with donation and ending with theft. Steiner argues that exploitation is closer to theft if an unfair involuntary exchange of value occurs (in theft there is no exchange, the value is involuntarily given). However, he finds this explanation problematic and offers a more complex interpretation, which fits better the notion under discussion. In a bilateral transfer of unequal exchanges, the potential exists for exploitation. For instance if the value of my labour is worth 5X, and both parties recognise it as such, but the purchaser has the power to pay only 3X, then the creator of the labour is being exploited.

My argument so far is that surplus value is a creation of capitalist market economies, education is such a market, one manifestation of this surplus value is realised through the generation of human capital of the student but not all surplus value accrues to the owner of that capital. So does this apply fully to education? I believe it does if employers of graduates gain return in excess of their investment and what they pay students, and universities seek benefits unrelated to the cost of their inputs. This leads me to my final proposition that the value created in this capital is distributed amongst the owners of the graduate employee's labour: employers, the institution and the students themselves. To find exploitation or the risk of exploitation we need to find inequitable distributions of surplus value and this is attempted in the next section.

It might be argued that the employers receive a return for the generic skills students bring to them and for which they pay very little. Indeed with their involvement in the design of the curriculum of the foundation degree, their involvement in creating skills immediately beneficial to their needs is increased. The cost of this return is minimal, thus creating surplus value that is in excess of their investment.

My position has to do with making space and time enough to fit the dignity of the individual in the final judgement. If the creation of productivity measures in higher education is secured through the use of societal resources there are legitimate questions to be raised if the benefit

accruing for them is primarily in the form of individual and corporate wealth. For instance the shift in higher education provision, (even if 50% of youth enjoy the benefits) into creating greater human capital for those who are certified as having received this benefit compared to those who have not, means that there is a legitimate moral objection to be made along the lines made by Marx.

If higher education improves the moral capital through the cultivation of higher values within society then it is plausible to argue that the whole of society benefits but then this criterion would mean in some deeper sense that the student deserves the award. It would be part of the implicit criteria associated with receiving a higher education. We might articulate our higher education system on desert, where professional responsibilities of the faculty are respected and issues of morality and culture are considered in the provision of certified education. This is not to lower standards but to widen them so that higher education can have a critical and radical role in our society and not simple acquiescence to the creeping privatisations of the public sector under the umbrella of globalisation.

### **3.5 *Phronimos* as quality assurance**

Harvey (2002) suggests that quality education has one major task: the improvement of the learning experience for the students and the development of research and scholarly activity. I agree that is what good education should do. To achieve this I borrow fit-for-purpose justifications developed by Cheng and Tam (1997:23) but, instead of creating the artificial notion of educational products, I remain with the transformative notion of the educational process. In this context fit-for purpose is not reducible to a range of quality performance indicators, for the goodness of the experience is personal and becomes inauthentic when reified through quasi-precision instruments in the form of over perspective learning outcomes and their accompanying modes of assessment. These modes of assessment, as I have tried to reveal, seek to provide entitlement that may lack in the richness of educational judgments, they enable the provision of entitlement based on merit devoid of worthy purpose.

This is not to argue against a direction of learning but to argue against a prescription of higher learning based on known outcomes which seem to us to be a contradiction in terms. I base this critique on the belief that higher education is risky for it should open unforeseen potentialities for students. This, however, cannot be fully prescribed prior to its realization. Freire is an inspiration here. Talking about the being and becoming of a teacher she writes:

“when we live our lives with the authenticity demanded by the practice of teaching that is also learning and learning that is also teaching, we are participating in a total experience that is simultaneously directive, political, ideological, Gnostic, pedagogical, aesthetic, and ethical. In this experience the beautiful, the decent, and the serious form a circle with hands joined,” (1998:31-32).

The responsibilities of the academicians and of the students are to create good education experiences, not necessarily one prescribed by technical standards but in a way which refrains from falling into the trap of puritanical moralism.

For Bernstein, as for Gadamer, technical competence (whether it is in skills or ideas) falls short of the wisdom I mention. For it is with wisdom that actions can gain their moral direction and practical wisdom supports a *praxis* of higher education. As Gadamer points out, *phronimos* is, “always in the situation of having to act in exigent circumstances. The image people have of what they ought to be, their conceptions of right and wrong, of decency, courage, dignity are always presupposed in decisions they are called upon to make,” (1975:283). Garrison has developed this in the teaching of students, claiming that, “teaching students to distinguish what they immediately and unreflectively desire from what they ought to desire after reflection is the ultimate goal of education . . . It is an education that lies beyond knowledge alone,” (1997:126).

The student and the teacher hold the responsibility for the initiation of these conversations jointly, for both are in the process of inquiry and deliberation. This conversation need not be confined to the face-to-face tutorial for, through the use of technology, time and space can be more readily utilised for this engagement. Indeed, by its use conversations can take place which were previously impossible but technology in these circumstances must retain its function as a means to a conversation and not the message. Technology retains the scientific power whereas the educational practitioner ought to exhibit the morality of *phronimos* to avoid exploitation and manipulation. Carr observes: “The man who lacks *phronesis* may be technically accountable, but he can never be morally answerable,” (1987:172). Carr again has important insights here. He states, “Educational practice cannot be made intelligible as a form of *poiesis* guided by fixed ends and governed by determinate rules. It can only be made intelligible as a form of *praxis* guided by ethical criteria immanent in educational practice itself: criteria which serve to distinguish genuine educational practices from those that are not, and good educational practice from that which is indifferent or bad,” (1987:173).

Further if we fail to find the spirit, the passion that is letting learn we fail to have a worthy purpose to the institution regardless of how diverse and fragmented its ‘discipline groups’ are. As Heidegger proposed the, “faculty is a faculty only if, rooted in the essence of its philosophy,<sup>143</sup> it develops into a faculty for spiritual legislation, able to shape those powers of human being (*Dasein*) that press it hard into the one spiritual world of people,” (1985:478).

#### 4. SUMMARY

To summarise I suggest that scholars (academics and students), in seeking worthy knowledge and understanding, seek to do this in three areas of their *praxis* of higher education:

1. Through mastery of knowledge, in order to contribute to their communities as active members of humanity.
2. Through enquiry as dialogue to gain an understanding of the nature of *phronimos* and, through a hermeneutic interpretation of the outcomes of their enquiry, freely to take responsibility for that interpretation as part of humanity.
3. It is the teacher who exhibits *phronimos* who is best able to reveal his interpretation of his decisions to engage in-this-world with scholarly activities as part of humanity and who can be personally trusted to bear the responsibility of shaping the future on behalf of all humanity.

These are heavy responsibilities to be shouldered by the scholar and will have implications for the recruitment of university teachers, but they are fair for those who accept the privileged use of resources they ought to enjoy. If such people are creating our future, then surely they are entitled to our resources unencumbered by commercial and political interests. Indeed De George recently claimed that such a university “must maintain its autonomy from its supporters with respect to its intellectual content – curriculum, courses, and their content, and research. Its supporters cannot dictate these, and they support the institution precisely because they trust the institution to provide what other institutions cannot provide”, (2003:13).

I hope that I have developed an argument that sets quality as part of a ‘pedagogy of confinement’ both temporality and in pedagogical terms. As an alternative (I recognise that it might only be one) I have proposed the idea

<sup>143</sup> I have use the word philosophy rather than science as it is in the text prior to the quote. Heidegger earlier explains his use of science to mean philosophy and it makes more sense when used in the quote.

that we should create good educational experiences that should be built upon academic and student responsibility and evidenced through enriched-merit entitlements. I have tried to argue that quality assurance as the manifestation of notions of quality create a form of education that is confining for students and teachers and that I want to reject this in favour of the engaging community of scholarly activity where there is no teaching without learning. I hope that in a diversified system of higher education as proposed in most countries of the world, room can be found for those who wish to contribute to society by partaking in this form of good education.

## Chapter 11

### REFLECTIONS

#### 1. THINKING ABOUT IT AGAIN

The existentialist *praxis* of higher education hinted at here is susceptible to criticism on the grounds of idealism and intellectual élitism. Taking each in order, an accusation of idealism is in a sense very valid. Ideals present a vision of sorts. Rescher describes them as instruments of imagination which, through their function, serve “as our index not of what *is* or *will* be, nor even what *can* be, but of what *should* be,” (1987:114, italics in original) and in this role they energize our actions. In this positive sense, idealism is worthy of its attempted realisations but this worthiness turns on the appropriateness of the ideals proposed. I clearly claim that the ideal university education proposed here is worth striving for regardless of whether it is immediately achievable, that there is worth in such activity and that the excellence it offers is in the public good. In support, not of these particular ideals but of the notion of ideals in education, I defer to De Ruyter (2003) who argues that in education, “a sense of realism should not be taken to imply the rejection of ideals in favour of more modest aims,” (2003:480). He continues that realistic expectations are necessary to overcome disillusionment and that one will enjoy “one’s attempts to achieve one’s aspirations and surmount one’s disillusion when it is for something one deeply desires” (2003:480). I hope the book evidences such desire and I realism the potential for failure.

In addressing the second point I would argue that this existential *praxis* is a negation of élitism (since this returns us to the economic notion of utility in the allocation of resources) for I favour a higher education policy designed



to fulfil everyone's potential as part of humanity, provided they are willing existentially to commit to it as a scholarly activity. This clearly has significant impact on institutional structures previously designed to teach passive recipients discipline-based 'knowledge'. Such a change is risky for institutions and may be counterproductive to the establishment of a discipline-based reputation. Although a discipline approach is encouraged by funding policies such as the REA exercises, it is a challenge that institutions are having to face if they are to be responsive to actual shifts in the range of students applying to them – for example, the more mature life-long adult learner. These students have experience and a context for their lives. They are conscious of their need to learn and their consciousness is connected to a social context. It is true that many value the functionality of vocational training but those seeking more, in the shape of a genuine learning community, may be frustrated by its atrophy in universities.

A higher education industry, developed to increase the number of accreditations of successful students, has been knowingly engaged in by some universities. This has been done with the Government's encouragement but is apt to produce an inferior, mediocre experience of higher education for those unable to qualify for the academy reserved for those whose attitudes and upbringing single them out for the continuation of their privileged existence. This inferior education is most likely to be experienced in the new universities who attract those most likely to be engaging with the experience of higher education for the first time. These are the students most likely to be cheated out of Jaspers' ideal of a university.

A danger of a rhetoric of education for all is that it is only affordable if provided for students in fragmented isolation or in inferior, instrumentally-based institutions. It is easy to envisage the involved, able and motivated student responding to the collaborative solidarity of working within a community of scholars, but the image may be stretched when applied to the phenomenon of current higher education provision, of part-time mature students studying vocational subjects at university outposts (their own homes or employers) in *their* local communities. Here, personal projects are undertaken away from a scholarly community, or in a community that has replaced scholarly activity with instruction in the instrumentality of materialism. Indeed, if the university is to be considered a place of security in which one can grow, discrete cells of educational activity focused on the successful completion of a programme might even be considered the antithesis of a *praxis* of higher education. Where distant, self-directed learning results in the removal of the possibilities for self-awareness and personal well-being as part of humanity, it can become self-serving and replaces higher education with a form of preparation for life as being-for-

others. In this it creates a deceit, not a substitute, for the non-instrumental aspects of higher education.

We would do well to heed Standish who warns us that the “atomisation of learning, in the unitised modular system militates against organic growth. Spontaneity, imagination, and the encounter with the unknown are suppressed for both teacher and learner,” (1997:453-4). Much is lost if dialogue is replaced by information transmission and we should guard against this. But I do not want to underestimate the problems that adopting the existential approach might create. As an educational goal for a scholarly community, I believe there is much to recommend it. Indeed if authenticity is a defining feature of university education, a *praxis* in the form I suggest is a necessity, but I refrain from assuming it is the only worthy form of educational project, for we ought not to be closed off to other opportunities. However, the onus to defend alternatives is on others, for space does not allow further development here.

My point is not to restrict participation but to widen it veraciously. Those who enter a university should do so to face their possibilities, not merely to emerge as trained practitioners of some profession or other; that can come later. It seems to me that we are intent on offering a form of mass education for the majority of students which is distinct in nature from that offered to other, more privileged students in certain other universities. There seems little moral justification for doing so. We need to confront the bad-faith and social divisiveness associated with the anonymity of mass higher education, and to confront the nature, not just the quality, of the learning experience we are offering those who engage with it and who deserve better. The place to encourage this is with teachers in universities. They have the responsibility to choose: to remain observational and gain the national curriculum they deserve (but with dire consequences for the creativity of our humanity) or to accept freedom for academic activities by accepting the responsibility of it, not as mere technicians but as *phronimos*.

The resolution is in the shape of teaching which forms the core of the new academic communities we develop in higher education. It is appropriate to discuss it now, as teaching is attracting renewed interest from all the stakeholders in our higher education provision. However, the current emphasis is focused on the passivity of learned competencies, leaving the notion of becoming a teacher as a role one can try on and, when the weather turns inclement, discard at one's convenience. This is being a teacher in bad-faith for it requires technique not involvement; it is superficial and impotent. It lacks the vitality and creativity of involvement that offers hope for the imagined future of humanity. Such hope can be facilitated by the educator who has a vocation and, as Gordon observes, “such an approach can only be authentic and in good faith if the educator grasps in depth, albeit

intuitively, the significance of his own *praxis*, including its dialectical complexity,” (1983:201). To do so we ought to adopt an approach to the preparation of university teachers that is not technicist but one inspired, to quote Dunne, by, “practising teachers who are not only *phronimoi* but are also well-equipped to teach apprentice teachers to become *phronimoi*,” (1997:370).

I am not assuming that education alone can change a social structure, a culture or a political system, as Freire is swift to point out it cannot, but it can contribute to such changes. The social and moral problems faced by society are growing ever more complex and solutions extend beyond the capabilities of local communities, so we need to trust our scholars even more than in the past. Scholarship can change the shape of humanity by becoming humanity itself and, in so doing, can lift the horizon on MacIntyre’s community of introspection. Through a scholastic community of dialogue and the harnessing of the mass media as a tool for humanity, a moral consensus – even in the face of the difficulties outlined by MacIntyre – can be imagined. One place it ought to flourish is in universities.<sup>144</sup>

I have presented in this book a case which, I hope, will be suggestive of the benefits of existential trust as the foundation upon which students and teachers can explore with themselves and others the fundamental assumptions of their lives, understanding and interpreting, authentically, their being. It is a *praxis* based on nourishing the plurality of a student’s authenticity as revealed through scholarly activities. In doing so the human condition is conceptualised as the happy coalescence of prudential acts and those done on the behalf of others in the solidarity of humanity. Neither has primacy over the other in some form of dualism. These are acts that show what we are and what we can become, as free-thinking adults in, and part of, our world.

Scholarly activity is positioned in this book as a facilitator of identity discovery which, it is proposed, is under attack from increasingly strong external influences which wish to exert control over educational practice. The control is through a particular set of instrumental goals for education which inevitably will lead to a de-humanising of authentic relationships within humanity. Should such principles prevail then education risks becoming no more than a deceit designed to alienate students from their humanity by replacing authenticity with living-for-others.

<sup>144</sup> The wider implications of the learned community as an educated public are beyond the scope of this book but are taken up by MacIntyre (1987) and discussed from a communitarian perspective by Tam (1998).

Lyotard's comments are just as pertinent today as when he wrote them: "But one thing that seems certain is that in both cases (reproduction and extension of knowledge) the process of delegitimation and the predominance of the performance criterion are sounding the knell on the age of the Professor: a professor is no more competent than memory bank networks in transmitting established knowledge, no more competent than interdisciplinary teams in imagining new moves or new games," (1993:53, brackets added).

Wise scholars willing to teach their equals though engaging dialogue have the power to alter significantly this prognosis, and such people deserve the privileges of the university. Scholars who have a vocation for teaching have a special responsibility to confront the challenge of instrumentality, alongside their current students and also on behalf of their future students. This existential engagement with what it is to flourish as a scholar can be facilitated through trusting relationships within a learning community. Clearly the responsibility does not stop there for if the results of scholarship are not widely available or understood, or bear no relation to the human condition, they remain the property of élites. Standish's insightful comments on the responsibility of intellectuals, subject to content is worthy to linger upon. He asks, following Derrida's profession of faith in the university, how far does this characterise the work in which the professor should rightfully be engaged and, "how this might indicate something of the future of the profession," (2002:15).

The *praxis* of higher education advocated here would sit uncomfortably after a form of compulsory education dedicated to the accreditation of students in a certain model of educated citizens. The potential risks of a national curriculum for higher education – a national curriculum which, I suggest, is destroying authenticity in the compulsory sector – needs to be addressed, but this is outside the remit of this book. What is within it and is advocated here is resistance by the universities to any form of external, non-scholarly interference in what can be, and how it ought to be, taught. This includes all who mistakenly believe that their interest extends to pedagogy and includes regulators, employers, professional bodies and sector skill councils. The dangers of manipulative interference in the process of self-discovery will need to be guarded against but, if scholars accept their moral responsibilities as a community of many correct views, society has nothing to fear and everything to gain by trusting them to seek our future. In this connection Smith and Webster comment on the apparent passivity of universities, not in fighting for political power and hence resource but, "there is a marked reluctance to articulate a motivating purpose, to address questions about the *raison d'être* of higher education . . . the university

seems resigned to a pre-set agenda which is narrowly instrumental, one can say passive,” (1998:4).

Finally, returning to the central question of this essay: *If we want to encourage authenticity in our university students what contribution might trust make to a praxis of higher education?* I propose to answer positively that trust can make a contribution for the three reasons listed below. However, as I have shown, these reasons may apply to certain kinds of study and may exclude others not addressed here. In particular, they apply to a *praxis* based on trust and where the flourishing of the individual is measured in terms other than economic.

1. Trust creates the atmosphere, the fore-structure, in which as scholars and teachers we can dare to consider such personal risks.
2. Trust is a precondition to take risks in good-faith and, through scholarly dialogue, to reveal oneself authentically.
3. Trust enables authenticity of the individual to flourish as part of, rather than separated from, humanity.

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